United Nations A/53/PV.51

# General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

*Official Records*

**51**st plenary meeting
Monday, 2 November 1998, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 14** (*continued*)

**Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

**Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Agency (A/53/286)**

**Draft resolution (A/53/L.18)**

**Amendment (A/53/L.19)**

**Mr. Mra** (Myanmar): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for his comprehensive report. This annual report enables us to review the work of the Agency, which is undergoing a dynamic transformation under its Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei. Allow me also to take this opportunity to assure him of our full support in the discharge of his mandate.

For more than 40 years, the International Atomic Energy Agency, as a special United Nations institution, has provided valuable assistance to Member States in the application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. There is no denying that the IAEA's prominent role in promoting international cooperation in the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes is today more relevant than ever to the interests of Member States.

The Agency's activities in the area of technical cooperation continue to play an important role in achieving sustainable development in developing countries. As we are all aware, supplying adequate and affordable energy services is an essential element of sustainable development. Here the challenge is to develop those energy services that best support development and the quality of life, especially in developing countries.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, emphasized the integration of environmental and developmental concerns into the decision-making process. Furthermore, Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in December 1997 in Kyoto, refocused attention on energy and the environment and also provided the International Atomic Energy Agency with an opportunity to present information about its work on the costs and benefits of nuclear energy and other energy alternatives. Indeed, that was one of the many examples of the Agency's contributing to the United Nations system-wide objective of sustainable development.

My delegation would also like to comment on the work of the Agency regarding the safety of radiation sources. It cannot be overemphasized that the safety of radiation sources and the security of radioactive material continue to be matters of special concern. There is a growing realization that the world population is exposed to radiation from a number of sources, including natural,

98-86278 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

artificial and occupational sources. The Agency's ongoing support, as a matter of priority, for the model project on the upgrading of radiation and waste safety infrastructures in some developing countries, with the focus on the control of radiation sources, is highly commendable. We are convinced that the Agency's involvement in that respect will bring about a working system of notification, authorization and control, and an inventory of all radiation sources in the participating developing countries.

Let me now briefly touch upon the Agency's nuclear safeguards and verification system, as stipulated in the Statute. Since the decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, the safeguards system and the verification of nuclear non-proliferation have become all the more important. It is therefore imperative that all IAEA safeguards and verification measures be applied in a non-discriminatory manner and in conformity with the relevant provisions of the NPT.

Nutritional deficiencies of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals continue to affect hundreds of millions of people, particularly in the developing world. In this regard, we are pleased to note that the IAEA's programmes directing attention to the use of isotopic techniques to identify populations at risk and to monitor and improve the effectiveness of dietary intervention programmes are benefiting the developing countries. My delegation is also appreciative of the IAEA's role in assisting its 128 member States, almost 80 per cent of which do not have nuclear power programmes, in the use of radionuclides, primarily for research, medical, industrial and agricultural applications.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend the fruitful cooperation between the IAEA and other United Nations bodies, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and other international organizations. It is essential that this cooperation be further strengthened.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank Director General Mohamed ElBaradei for his report and for his able guidance of the work of the Agency. We are confident that, under his leadership, the Agency will be able to meet the challenges ahead.

**Ms. Rozgoňová** (Slovakia): Slovakia associated itself with the statement presented by the representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, since Slovakia was recently elected a member of the Board of Governors, I would also like to make a statement on the national level.

First of all, I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), led by Director General Mohamed ElBaradei during the past year.

The Slovak Republic considers the International Atomic Energy Agency to be the key organization which fulfils, through its safeguards system, irreplaceable functions in the observance of the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in the promotion of international cooperation in the peaceful use of atomic energy. Slovakia also appreciates the role of the Agency in ensuring that the assistance it provides in various forms to member States is not misused for military purposes.

The Agency's success over the 41 years of its existence is the result of the common efforts of the member States and the secretariat in the field of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, as well as in technical cooperation. Slovakia, as a country with an active nuclear programme, ascribes great importance to cooperation with the IAEA in the development of the Slovak nuclear programme and the improvement of its nuclear safety.

I would like to mention the key positions of Slovakia on the nuclear agenda. Slovakia welcomed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons at the Review and Extension Conference in 1995, which supported the activities of the Agency in the area of technical cooperation and the application of the safeguards system. We believe that the Review Conference in 2000 will result in a positive evaluation of the Treaty implementation and that it will approve the new measures aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and the further improvement of the efficiency of the safeguards system. Slovakia sees the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as very important elements of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament are also strengthened by the growing number of signatories to the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which has reached 150, and by its 21 ratifications. Slovakia ratified the CTBT in March 1998 as one of the 44 countries the ratifications of which are necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty. Slovakia supports the process of enhancing cooperation between the Agency and the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization for political, technical and financial reasons.

The issue of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament was brought to the centre of the international community's attention after the nuclear tests in India and Pakistan. Slovakia expressed its concern about these tests and we hope that, after the recent statements of the Prime Ministers of both countries, India and Pakistan will sign and ratify the CTBT without condition and without delay.

Another contribution to the Review Conference of the NPT in 2000, in our view, is the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiations on the preparation of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive devices. We support the initiative of the Director General of the IAEA to offer the assistance of the Agency to the Conference on Disarmament in developing the technical arrangements for this treaty.

We are in favour of the verification activities of the IAEA with respect to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We welcome the initiative of the Director General to provide the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the Model Additional Protocol and we hope that it will cooperate fully with the IAEA in the implementation of its safeguards obligations and negotiate the adoption of an Additional Protocol.

Slovakia regrets the decision of Iraq to suspend its cooperation with the Security Council and the IAEA and urges Iraq to observe the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Secretary-General of February 1998.

I would like to turn now to some organizational matters which have been initiated by the Director General.

Slovakia follows with great attention the implementation of the Action Plan, which resulted from the senior management conference in January of this year. In view of the financial difficulties the Agency has been experiencing over the last decade, we welcome the initiatives to put a greater emphasis on the programme and budget formulation process by creating a new programme coordination committee. The process of optimizing resource allocation while maintaining the main functions of the Agency should be carefully evaluated and further developed. The main aim of this process should result in improved cost-effectiveness, to the benefit of member States.

In connection with the Action Plan, my country is looking forward to the preparation of the medium-term strategy, a document which will chart the direction of the Agency over the next five years. We expect that this document will in a very concrete form set out the overall objectives and goals for optimizing resource allocation and maintaining the main functions of the Agency.

In the area of strengthened safeguards systems, Slovakia sees in the conclusion of additional protocols to safeguards agreements a significant contribution to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, to which Slovakia is ready to contribute.

After Slovakia's active participation in Committee 24, and the subsequent consultations with the Agency, the Board of Governors approved in September the text of the new agreement between the Slovak Republic and the IAEA for the applications of safeguards in connection with the NPT and the protocol additional to this agreement. The safeguards agreement will replace the present agreement, which was concluded with the Government of the former Czechoslovakia.

Cooperation between the Agency and member States in the area of nuclear safety and radiation protection is one of the most important issues for Slovakia. Nuclear energy plays an important role in the Slovak economy, with nuclear power plants producing nearly 50 per cent of Slovakia's electricity.

This year Slovakia celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the commissioning of the first unit of a nuclear power plant with a water-cooled and water-moderated reactor (WWER) at Jaslovske Bohunice.

The commissioning of the first unit of the second nuclear power plant in Slovakia, the Mochovce nuclear power plant, took place on 9 June 1998. The commissioning of the Mochovce nuclear power plant unit 2 is planned for 1999. The commissioning of this power plant was preceded by technically and financially

demanding completion work and safety upgrading programmes. The Mochovce nuclear power plant is an example of international cooperation in achieving internationally acceptable safety standards. Companies from France, Germany, the United States, the Russian Federation, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, together with the Agency, participated significantly in the upgrading of the safety level of this nuclear power plant. The competent Slovak authorities consider the Agency's assistance in particular to be an essential component of international transparency in all safety-related matters.

Slovakia ratified the Convention on Nuclear Safety on 7 March 1995, as the first country with land-based nuclear reactors in operation.

In the area of radiation protection, Slovakia has contributed significantly to the strengthening of international cooperation by taking steps necessary for the ratification of the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management. Following the adoption of resolution GC(41)/RES/11 at the forty-first IAEA General Conference, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has expressed its approval of the Joint Convention and we expect to deposit the instruments of ratification with the Director General of the IAEA by the end of 1998.

With respect to resolution GC(41)/RES/21, the Slovak Government decided in July this year to participate in and support the international initiative for the Chernobyl sarcophagus. Slovakia will contribute to the Shelter Implementation Plan the amount of 2 million ECU, and this contribution will be pledged despite the budgetary difficulties and the natural disasters which have occurred in Slovakia this year.

**Mr. Squadron** (United States of America): On behalf of the United States, I would like to commend the Director General for his report. We note with appreciation his outstanding performance this past year as the new Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in support of the IAEA's important contributions to international peace and prosperity.

Over the years, the IAEA has been committed to a diverse set of programmes that enhance the security, the health, the environment and the safety of the international community. It has done so with distinction. The IAEA's achievements reflected in the Director General's report demonstrate the critical role of the Agency in encouraging cooperation in the many important peaceful uses of nuclear material and technology under sound non-proliferation conditions.

The Agency's safeguards system performs the essential function of verifying compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other non-proliferation treaties. The United States reaffirms the importance of the Model Additional Protocol approved on 15 May 1997, and is proud to have been the first nuclear-weapon State to sign the additional protocol. The United States strongly supports continued efforts to bring the agreed new safeguards measures into effect as quickly and as widely as possible.

Strengthening nuclear safety continues to be a central goal of the IAEA. The Department of Nuclear Safety works effectively with other elements of the Agency and the member States to ensure that safety remains a priority in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The Agency's extensive training programmes promote safety. Operational safety review teams and other safety services provided by the IAEA to its member States offer top quality advice and help to focus the Agency's safety assistance and technical cooperation programmes where they are most needed. The Convention on Nuclear Safety, for which the IAEA serves as Secretariat, embodies the commitment of its signatories to safety. The United States reaffirms its strong support for the IAEA's work in nuclear safety throughout the world and our commitment to strengthen further these important activities.

The United States would also like to commend the Agency's continued efforts to implement the Security Council resolutions in regard to Iraq. The United States strongly urges Iraq to rescind its 5 August decision to suspend cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the IAEA. As stated in the 14 May Security Council presidential statement, Iraq must answer all of the IAEA's remaining questions and concerns before the Council will endorse a transition to long-term monitoring. In particular, as required under Security Council resolution 715 (1991), Iraq should pass penal legislation prohibiting activity contrary to Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

The United States is concerned about the lack of cooperation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with the IAEA. We encourage that country to work with the Agency to take all steps deemed necessary by the IAEA to monitor the Agreed Framework. We also encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to

take steps now — such as steps to preserve information — which will help facilitate the IAEA's task of verifying that country's initial declarations at the appropriate time under the Agreed Framework. We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abide by the terms of the Agreed Framework and to take no action which could be perceived as undermining its commitment to the Framework.

The United States commends the IAEA's programme for combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. Sixty countries presently participate in the Agency's illicit trafficking database, which demonstrates a strong interest in cooperative efforts in monitoring nuclear materials and other radioactive sources. We are grateful to the IAEA for its leadership in providing systematic and methodical analyses in this critical area. Additionally, since good physical protection is the best means to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear material, we commend the Agency's efforts in working to improve physical protection guidelines and assisting States in implementing effective physical protection systems.

The United States wishes to reiterate its continued support for the IAEA's technical cooperation programme. As the major contributor to this valuable programme, we recognize its importance in promoting the quality of human life in many countries. The diverse projects undertaken by the technical cooperation programme and their many benefits provide the world with a better understanding of how nuclear materials can be used to help solve problems in medicine, health, agriculture and basic industry. This work helps to fulfil the vision of expanding the peaceful uses of nuclear material for the future.

On behalf of the Government of the United States, I would again like to thank Mr. ElBaradei for his report and note the superb beginning of his tenure. We look forward to our continued cooperation with the IAEA, recognizing fully the importance of this valuable asset to the security of the world and its people.

**Mr. Nejad Hosseinian** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran notes with satisfaction the annual report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to the General Assembly for the year 1997, which summarizes the Agency's significant achievements during that period. We thank Mr. ElBaradei, the Director General of the IAEA, for his thorough and informative statement featuring the main developments in the activities of the Agency during 1997.

The Islamic Republic of Iran attaches great importance to international cooperation in the peaceful application of nuclear energy, and has pursued with great interest the promotional role of the Agency in this field. My delegation appreciates the useful technical cooperation the Agency extends to Member States in the field of agriculture, industry, medicine and other related areas, such as water desalination. In this regard, the importance of sustained funding, particularly through voluntary contributions, for the Agency's technical assistance programs needs to be highlighted. The fact that the Agency's Technical Cooperation Fund is not based on predictable and assured resources is a matter of concern for all developing countries.

Exceptional cases of violation of IAEA safeguards in the recent past, however, have provided an excuse for certain nuclear-weapon States and some other industrialized countries to undermine the statutory tasks and obligations of the Agency towards the developing countries and to infringe more than before upon the rights of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) with regard to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Such policies are pursued for political gain and are against the interests and needs of even those developing countries that are certified by IAEA inspections for their peaceful nuclear energy programmes and that have pursued an open-door policy regarding the IAEA inspections.

Parties to the NPT, as the Treaty stipulates, have the right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This right should be ensured by member States, and not violated. Not only should access to nuclear energy be unimpeded, but preferential treatment should be provided, in conformity with the Treaty. This, of course, does not prevent any State from raising concerns about possible mischief by any other State. But this should not be arbitrary and unilateral. The IAEA is the competent authority to address such concerns. The parties to the NPT, in fact, reaffirmed their acceptance of this authority and agreed that their concerns should be submitted to the IAEA with supporting evidence. They further agreed that the IAEA should examine these concerns and make its conclusions on the issue. Therefore, the States that decide not to cooperate with any member of the NPT whose compliance with the provisions of the Treaty has been verified by the IAEA fail in their solemn undertaking to facilitate the fullest exchange of equipment, material and scientific and technological information for peaceful uses of nuclear energy, to which the Treaty binds them. It was

also stressed at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference that such facilities must be provided to all States parties, without discrimination.

Regarding implementation of the protocol additional to safeguards agreements, my Government firmly believes that this protocol should be applied equally and in a non-discriminatory manner to nuclear facilities and activities of all States members of the Agency, and in particular nuclear-weapon States. The universality of the new safeguards system is an effective way to ensure the compliance of all States that have assumed obligations under the NPT and the Statute of the IAEA.

We commend the efforts of the Agency in enhancing nuclear safety and radiation protection. We firmly believe that the scope of such measures should be expanded to all regions that operate nuclear installations, as the risks to life, health, environment and security emanating from such installations are not confined by national boundaries.

In this context, the continued operation of the unsafeguarded and entirely non-peaceful nuclear facilities in Israel is a source of great concern to the Middle Eastern countries. The refusal of Israel, the sole non-party in the Middle East to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to place its nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has defeated all efforts aimed at the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. My delegation welcomes the final communiqué of the twenty-fifth session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers in March 1998, which *inter alia*, called upon the Security Council to obtain Israel's renunciation of nuclear armament, and to submit a full report on its stockpile of nuclear weapons and ammunition to the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also commend the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) recommendation in this respect, as well as the recent decision of the General Conference of the IAEA at its forty-second session to restore an item to its agenda at its forty-third session on Israel's nuclear capabilities and threat. We call upon the international community, and in particular the IAEA, to address this issue urgently and effectively.

As to the issue of the revision of article VI of the Statute of the Agency on the composition of the Board of Governors, we did not see any positive development in the year under review. The issue is simple: Africa and the Middle East and South Asian group of countries have been under-represented in the Board of Governors for decades, and their legitimate proposal to amend article VI of the Statute aimed at making the composition of the Board proportionate to an increased membership of the Agency has not resulted in concrete action. The issue has been complicated in recent years by an unacceptable procedure that has allowed the genuine and long-standing proposal of countries located in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia to become hostage to a package approach calling for a review of the composition of the Middle East and South Asian region. We are convinced that the composition of any geographical grouping of the Agency can be decided only by members of that grouping and should not be dictated from outside.

In conclusion, allow me once again to extend our appreciation and support to the IAEA for its efforts in promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. We hope that the IAEA, under the new leadership, will continue to promote its lofty objectives into the next century.

**Mr. Akram** (Pakistan): I would like to congratulate Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), on his excellent leadership and the effective manner in which he is organizing the work of the Agency. I would like to thank Mr. ElBaradei for his comprehensive statement, made earlier today. The long experience that he has had with the Agency will, I am sure, help in achieving the statutory goals and objectives of the IAEA.

Pakistan is a founding member of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We remain firmly committed to its statutory goals and objectives. Pakistan takes justifiable pride in its close cooperation and partnership with the Agency over the past 40 years. We have benefited greatly from cooperation with the Agency in areas ranging from nuclear medicine to nuclear safety. Pakistan's impeccable record in terms of nuclear safety and safeguards, its participation in the Agency's promotional activities and its active role in the IAEA's policy-making organs reflect our abiding commitment to the promotion of peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Since energy is a vital input to the development process, energy consumption per capita is bound to increase sharply in developing countries. This increase in energy demand cannot be met by fossil fuels alone, since that would impose an unacceptable burden on the environment. The massive development of hydropower is one option. The only other proven and sustainable option

is nuclear energy. Despite Chernobyl, the safety record of the nuclear industry is unmatched by any other major enterprise. Opposition to nuclear power is thus based on misunderstanding or is a deliberate pretext to deny this technology to less-favoured nations.

Unfortunately, the growth of nuclear power in both industrialized and developing countries, has slowed during the last two decades, partly for economic reasons, but largely due to ill-informed decisions. There are, nevertheless, some positive signs. For example, there is renewed debate in some European countries regarding their previous decisions to abandon nuclear power. A number of Asian countries are committed to, or keenly interested in, nuclear power. The Agency must play an active role in strengthening the technical infrastructure of member States that are interested in the promotion of nuclear power. We feel that to address the financial requirements of such a supportive role by the Agency, the creation of a nuclear power fund deserves consideration.

Pakistan, which is deficient in fossil fuels, can greatly benefit from nuclear energy production. Although our initial ambitious IAEA-sponsored programme was made impossible by the post-1974 termination of peaceful and safeguarded nuclear cooperation by certain countries, Pakistan maintained and significantly enlarged its capabilities in the various elements of the nuclear fuel cycle. At present, we operate two research reactors and one power reactor, safely and effectively. We are grateful for the Agency's cooperation and assistance for safety upgrades of the Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (KANUPP) power reactor. The construction of the Chashma nuclear power plant, provided under IAEA safeguards by China, is proceeding satisfactorily. We gratefully acknowledge the valuable cooperation extended by the IAEA in various construction phases of the plant. We look forward to continued cooperation during the operational phase of the Chashma nuclear power plant and a planned second Chashma power reactor.

Technical cooperation is the backbone of the Agency's promotional activities. We wish to congratulate the Department of Technical Cooperation on attaining an all-time high implementation rate of 76.2 per cent in 1997, which is a tribute to the planning, management and diligence of the Department. At the same time, we are distressed that the Technical Cooperation Fund (TCF) target pledged during the year was an all-time low of 70.2 per cent, resulting in a sharp decline in the available TCF resources as compared to 1995 and 1996.

Pakistan accords the highest priority to safety in its nuclear facilities, and has benefited from the nuclear safety expertise available through the Agency. The recent entry into force of the international Convention on Nuclear Safety is a welcome step. We hope that the IAEA will now ensure the fullest possible exchange of safety-related information and the sharing of expertise. Pakistan, as a State party to the Nuclear Safety Convention, will continue to cooperate with the IAEA on this issue.

Implementation of nuclear safeguards agreements constitutes an important facet of the IAEA's activities. We are satisfied that during 1997 the IAEA's vast safeguards related activities, spreading over 900 facilities in some 70 countries and involving more than 10,000 person-days of inspection, show that the nuclear material and other items declared and placed under the Agency's safeguards remained in peaceful nuclear activities and were adequately accounted for. For its part, Pakistan has faithfully discharged its safeguards obligations under our agreements with the Agency of the INFCIRC/66 category.

Pakistan has noted the conclusion and approval by the Board of Governors of the protocol additional to safeguards agreements. The protocol is meant for countries which have INFCIRC/153-type safeguards agreements with the Agency. Suggestions to extend the programme to non-full-scope safeguards countries are contrary to the objectives and legal basis of the programme.

Among the technical agencies set up by the United Nations, the IAEA is undoubtedly an exemplary organization in its efficiency and professionalism. It is important that the Agency maintain its focus on its technical and promotional character. Unfortunately, over the past few years, there has been an inordinate shift towards the verification rather than the promotional role of the IAEA. Political issues and debates have been taking up an increasing proportion of the time and effort of the Secretariat and its policy-making organs. This trend needs to be reversed and the balance established in the IAEA's statute restored. Safeguards are, of course, one of the basic functions of the Agency. We remain supportive of the cost-effective implementation of safeguards in accordance with treaties or agreements voluntarily entered into by States. However, safeguards are not an end in themselves. They are designed to create an enabling environment for the promotion of the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

The regulatory responsibility of the Agency should not lead to the imposition of arbitrary restrictions on the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Unfortunately, restrictions have been imposed, even when it is evident that no proliferation dangers are involved. At times, even safety-related information has been refused. This approach is not conducive to the evolution of safer techniques and methods, or to the promotion of greater openness and transparency in the field of nuclear technology. Since these are the key objectives of the Agency, we hope that the IAEA will redouble its efforts for their achievement. The International Atomic Energy Agency should strive to remove all impediments to the transfer of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

We expect the Agency to adopt non-discriminatory measures in providing access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The Agency's primary purpose is to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear power under technically safe conditions, not to serve as a nuclear policeman or the arm for non-proliferation crusaders.

In this context, Pakistan regrets that certain members forced a discussion of nuclear testing in South Asia into the proceedings of the last IAEA General Conference. We have witnessed this polemical injection in certain statements made here as well. The IAEA's technical expertise and highly professional repute will suffer from recourse to such politically motivated moves. Pakistan opposed the proposals to criticize our nuclear tests of last May. We have explained that Pakistan was compelled to demonstrate its nuclear capacity in response to India's earlier tests in order to maintain the credibility of nuclear deterrence which has existed in undeclared form for over two decades in South Asia. Clearly, this issue is sought to be utilized by some States to divert attention away from the priority goal of nuclear disarmament. Ironically, these Powers, and their faithful allies that had sponsored the IAEA decision to criticize the South Asian tests, themselves felt obliged to abstain in the vote on this decision because of the adoption of an amendment urging progress towards nuclear disarmament. This unfortunate episode not only marred the proceedings of the IAEA General Conference; it revealed clearly the source of the real problem which confronts the promotion of peaceful nuclear energy — the crass discrimination practised by the major nuclear Powers and their military alliance partners. We hope that such partisan political games will no longer be played in the IAEA.

**Mr. Elaraby** (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic):* I should like to extend my thanks to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for the excellent manner in which he presented the report of the Agency this year. I wish also to congratulate him — an able Egyptian diplomat — on the great achievements he has made in the course of the short period since he took office. May I also express our gratitude to and recognition of Mr. Hans Blix, the previous Director General, for the great service he rendered over the year. These services contributed to strengthening the work of the Agency.

We have studied the annual report of the Agency. Egypt attaches great importance to the safeguards regime of the IAEA to control and monitor the peaceful uses of nuclear power by halting the diversion of nuclear energy to military use, through a set of rules and inspection criteria to be applied by the Agency, including the verification activities of 1997.

Despite the fact that the Agency's efforts in the field of verification and compliance and the fact that its Board of Governors adopted in May 1997 what is known as the 93+2 system, which provides the legal basis required for strengthening the Agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear material and activities, there is a nuclear programme at the eastern borders of Egypt not subjected to these safeguards. This creates a very dangerous situation for the whole region, and threatens it with disastrous consequences unless the Agency and the international community endeavour to avert such a disaster. Despite international alarm vis-à-vis the latest developments in South Asia, those developments should not lessen the gravity of the situation in the Middle East. This is due to Israel's non-accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its refusal to subject its nuclear facilities to the Agency's comprehensive safeguards. This calls for intensive international efforts, both at the United Nations and at the Agency, to compel Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to subject all its nuclear facilities to the Agency's comprehensive safeguards, as a natural beginning of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons. In this context, Egypt encourages the Agency to take tenacious, vigorous steps to pave the way for appropriate regional arrangements to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, an initiative we have supported since 1974.

There is no doubt that the workshop on safeguards and verification technology, held in May 1998 in response to a request made by Egypt at the forty-first session of the General Conference, reflects the Agency's ongoing implementation of its decision regarding the

application of safeguards in the Middle East. The agenda of the workshop was somewhat disappointing, as it focused on general and technical aspects of verification without providing direction to such activities or even linking them to the Middle East, which diverted the attention of the workshop from its main objectives. In spite of that, the convening of the workshop and other similar activities specifically orienting them to address areas of disagreement can advance the application of Agency safeguards in the Middle East. Hence the Agency should continue to convene such meetings and should rationalize their agendas with a view to reaching the desired goals.

With these considerations in mind, Egypt holds a position of principle on the question of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, based on our conviction that removing the danger of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is the way to achieve real peace in that region. It would also serve the interests of all its peoples and would enhance good-neighbourliness and regional peace and security. It would undoubtedly be an important measure to build confidence among the States of the region.

I refer here to the April 1990 initiative of President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction, and to his June 1998 announcement of a more comprehensive initiative: to rid the entire world of weapons of mass destruction in view of the threat posed by such weapons and the need to enhance international peace and security. President Mubarak also called for the convening of an international conference with the purpose of reaching that goal within a defined time-frame. Egypt will work to give timely effect to these initiatives.

The Agency has made an enormous effort to transfer peaceful nuclear technologies to developing countries through its technical cooperation programme with its member States. In that connection, we have studied the Agency's 1997 report as it relates to such technical cooperation activities. Egypt attaches great importance to non-proliferation, within the framework of various Agency activities, and considers that technical cooperation complements the Agency's activities and enhances its credibility. It is also part and parcel of the Agency's efforts to promote the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and, consequently, the efforts of the international community to curb the non-peaceful uses of that energy. In that connection, I note our concern at the crisis in implementing the Agency's technical cooperation programme, and therefore appeal to donor States to give this matter particular attention in order to strengthen the role of the Agency in technical cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Let me turn now to the Agency's activities with respect to Iraq. I shall refer here to the most recent status report of the Director General of the Agency, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, to the Security Council. In this context, I reiterate our firm position on this matter: Iraq must cooperate fully both with the Agency and with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). This would make it possible to close the file of weapons prohibited under part C of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) by the terms of paragraph 22 of that resolution. That would help towards lifting the sanctions that have been imposed on Iraq for more than seven years and that have inflicted harsh human suffering on the Iraqi people. The report of the Director General clearly states that

(*spoke in English*)

> "There are no indications that there remains in Iraq any physical capability for the production of weapon-usable nuclear material of any practical significance." (*S/1998/694, annex, appendix, enclosure I, para. 77*)

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Those words are self-explanatory. It is perfectly clear and perfectly logical that without Iraq's cooperation the Agency would not have been able to arrive at that degree of certainty in its conclusion. It is time for the entire nuclear file to be moved to the status of ongoing monitoring and verification.

There is another topic I wish to address today, even though it does not fall within the framework of the report of the Agency. It goes, however, to the essence of the Agency's work and its ability to contend with the changing international political scene. I refer to amending article VI of the statute of the Agency, which relates to expanding the membership of the Board of Governors. On several occasions Egypt has stressed that it is a matter of urgency to expand the Board so that it can reflect the great increase in the membership of the Agency. If this is done, it will strengthen the administrative, technical and political authority of the Board of Governors in adopting decisions that command the broadest possible acceptance by the international community. Highlighting this issue, the IAEA General Conference has adopted a resolution noting that Africa, the Middle East and South

Asia were under-represented on the Board, and that this matter should be redressed. Expansion of the Board of Governors is a matter of urgency and of increasing importance; it would contribute to an increase of benefits to developing countries and to their wider participation in the work of the Agency. This would have a positive impact on the performance of the Agency itself. It would be best to settle this matter in a comprehensive and just manner so as to avoid reverting to the subject of Board expansion again in the future.

Egypt's election to membership of the Board of Governors at the forty-second session of the General Conference highlights the active role my country plays in the field of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. During its tenure, Egypt will continue to work energetically to enhance the endeavours and activities of the Agency for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and for making them available to developing countries through the technical cooperation programme of the Agency.

**Mr. Abelian** (Armenia): Let me begin by expressing my Government's gratitude for the important work carried out by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during 1997 and during the first part of 1998. We commend the Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, and the Agency's secretariat and other staff for their commitment and professionalism in carrying out an extensive programme under resource constraints.

We are confident that under the leadership of Mr. ElBaradei, whose vast experience and skills are well known to us all, the Agency will make significant progress towards its two main objectives — the promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy and safeguarding against the use of nuclear material for military purposes.

We welcome the report of the IAEA to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, as it provides us with a valuable opportunity to review the Agency's activities and to evaluate their impact in the areas which the Agency is actively engaged in.

Since its establishment, the IAEA has worked to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It has played and continues to play a crucial role in expanding cooperation among member States to this end. The IAEA's role as a central medium for the transfer and application of nuclear technology has contributed to the economic development of member States. We fully support the Agency's view that encouraging nuclear technology transfer for exclusively peaceful purposes is an integral part of the international consensus relating to the peaceful use of nuclear energy that is embodied in the IAEA statute and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Armenia's policy with respect to nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is clear and consistent. It is based on a serious and genuine commitment to the objectives and principles of non-proliferation. In order to further ensure the implementation of the NPT, States parties must continue to abide by the safeguards system of the IAEA. Armenia supports the strengthening and improvement of the effectiveness of the safeguards regime by introducing the protocol additional to safeguards agreements based on the text of the Model Protocol approved by the IAEA Board of Governors in 1997. We are proud to state that Armenia has become the first State with an operating power plant to sign the protocol additional to its safeguards agreement.

Encouraging an increasing number of States committed to non-proliferation to sign the protocol would serve two purposes: one, to subject the portion of the world's nuclear fuel cycle currently under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards to a further strengthened system of safeguards; and, two, to exert requisite influence on the States which are prone to pursuing undeclared nuclear activities, with a view to their eventual adoption of this new norm.

Armenia attaches great importance to cooperation in the field of peaceful energy use and nuclear safety. In this context, I am pleased to announce that during the forty-second General Conference the delegation of Armenia deposited Armenia's instrument of ratification of the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Nuclear safety is a fundamental issue. Universal recognition of the importance of implementing the provisions of the Convention at national, regional and international levels will promote and maintain the highest standards of safety. It is in the interests of us all that those States that have not yet signed and ratified the Convention do so at the earliest possible date. We also look forward to actively participating in the first Review Meeting of the Convention in April 1999.

Armenia considers the IAEA as a key partner in developing its programme of peaceful nuclear energy. The IAEA has made a significant contribution to the reactivation of one of the units of the Medzamor nuclear power plant. We would also like to commend the Agency for its ongoing assistance in ensuring the plant's safe

operation. The IAEA's assistance in enhancing the seismic safety of the Medzamor nuclear power plant is of special importance to us. As a national coordinator of technical cooperation programmes, the National Regulatory Authority oversees the activities of Armenia's agencies and organizations that are engaged in projects under the auspices of the IAEA. Under the technical cooperation programme, Armenia is currently implementing eight national and nine regional projects that are aimed in particular at the strengthening of the safety of the Medzamor nuclear power plant.

Armenia and the IAEA are working together on the elaboration of the technical cooperation programme for 1999-2000. We continue to view the IAEA technical cooperation programme as an integral part of the Agency's activities contributing to sustainable development. We hope that the donor States will continue to make contributions to the Technical Cooperation Fund in order to further assist the newly independent States in strengthening their national infrastructures, training the specialists required for the safe utilization of nuclear energy and bringing their operational standards into compliance with the current requirements of the IAEA.

Armenia values cooperation with IAEA member States. Under the aegis of the IAEA, Armenia is expanding cooperation with the Russian Federation, the United States, the member States of the European Union — particularly France and Germany — and with Argentina and Slovakia, as well as other partner countries. Cooperation with our partners includes implementation of joint projects on nuclear safety research and sustainable development, exchange of technical information, improvement of operational safety standards and radiation protection at nuclear power plants, seismic safety and the training of technical personnel.

We are concerned about the possible negative impact of nuclear tests in South Asia on the international non-proliferation regime. We are pleased to hear that no further nuclear tests are planned and that both States have shown their intention to accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), thereby enabling the Treaty to enter into force. We are convinced that the entry into force of the CTBT and the successful conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty will greatly enhance international peace and security.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the Director General of my country's full cooperation in his work to further the goals of the IAEA. We hope that draft resolution A/53/L.18, of which Armenia is a sponsor, will be adopted by consensus.

**Mr. Valle** (Brazil) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the delegations of the member countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay — and the delegations of the associated States of Bolivia and Chile, we wish to express our satisfaction with the report submitted by the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei.

We would once again like to highlight the importance we attach to the International Atomic Energy Agency as the promoter of the use of nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes and its key role in the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, whose progress should further extend the tasks of the Agency in the not too distant future. Similarly, the member and associated countries of MERCOSUR would again like to reiterate our full commitment to the safeguards regime applied and administered by the IAEA.

In this regard, we welcome the growing and positive interaction between the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) and the IAEA, recently reflected in the technical cooperation agreement signed by both Agencies in May 1998. We also deem it worth recalling that Argentina and Brazil have offered to share with other countries their experience in creating and setting up the ABACC as a contribution to the international non-proliferation regime.

In this context, we are pleased with the conclusion of the agreement on cooperation for the promotion of nuclear science and technology in Latin America, a specific instrument to multilaterally channel cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the Latin American region. Likewise, we look forward with interest to the conclusions of the senior group of experts on the possible courses of action for the general programme and priorities of the Agency in the future, which will be considered by the Board of Governors at their meeting next March.

In conclusion, the member and associate countries of MERCOSUR wish once again to highlight the laudable work carried out by the Agency in applying safeguards and in international cooperation. We also wish to reiterate our thanks for the full report made available to us for our consideration.

**Mr. Dausá Céspedes** (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Before I delve into the subject of concern today, allow me to express Cuba's deepest condolences and full solidarity at the loss of life and property in the fraternal Central American countries as a result of the scourge of Hurricane Mitch.

I should like at the outset to thank the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for his report.

Cuba sees as positive the modest yet tangible advances achieved in the area of technical cooperation by the IAEA in recent years, including the efforts carried out by the Agency's Department of Technical Cooperation Department to increase its effectiveness and efficiency.

Development, promotion and technical cooperation activities should not only be maintained but strengthened on a yearly basis because they form the cornerstone of the Agency's raison d'être. Our experience of the past 40 years and of the past few decades in particular has made clear the limitless possibilities offered by the appropriate use of nuclear technology. These include much higher-yielding or disease-resistant plant varieties, pathogen-free food and more efficient methods for diagnosing widespread illnesses, to mention but a few.

Cuba, as many other countries, has benefited from technical cooperation with the IAEA. We continue also to make a practical contribution to furthering that cooperation. We have provided experts to other countries in various areas; we have made our facilities available for the training of foreign specialists; and certain Cuban products have even been used in international cooperation projects in the area of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Cuba is concerned at the positions taken by some developed countries that are aimed at minimizing the importance of cooperation issues and even reducing their contributions to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Fund. The annual report of the Agency for 1997, which the Assembly will take note of today, reflects the difficult situation faced in the past year regarding funding to implement the planned cooperation programme. The figures for the 1999-2000 biennium do not cover actual needs, and it has not even been possible to determine approximate figures for the 2000-2001 biennium.

A priority challenge for the Agency in the immediate future must be the adoption of a comprehensive and effective programme to strengthen technical cooperation similar to the one adopted to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguards.

We in the Latin American and Caribbean region welcome the entry into force of the governmental agreement to support the programme on Regional Cooperative Arrangements for the Promotion of Nuclear Science and Technology in Latin America (ARCAL). Cuba is pleased that preparations for this agreement took place at the meeting of the leading nuclear authorities of the member countries of ARCAL, held in Havana last year.

Despite the strong rejection expressed by many States for activities of this kind, unfortunately there are countries that are not even concerned with the most fundamental principles of international coexistence and that attempt to manipulate international agencies based on narrow political interests. Last week the Government of the United States adopted an omnibus bill on appropriations, of which two full sections — 2809 and 2810 — are devoted entirely to detailing various ways to boycott the Cuban nuclear programmes, and in particular cooperation between the IAEA and Cuba. Those sections also provide for a reduction in assistance funds for third countries commensurate with the resources they supply to Cuba's nuclear programme, despite the fact that it has strictly peaceful purposes. Actions of this nature are reprehensible and are categorically rejected by my country.

Cuba recognizes the efforts made to strengthen the IAEA safeguards regime, which culminated in the adoption of the Model Additional Protocol last year. We hope that the Agency will continue to advance along this difficult path, taking due note of the legitimate concerns of States and rigorously ensuring that safeguards activities do not become an unacceptable financial burden for developing countries.

In this context, I wish to reiterate my country's serious reservations as to the non-proliferation regime based on the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which some attempt to use as a model. Cuba believes that the NPT is a selective and discriminatory non-proliferation regime that establishes different categories of States with different rights and obligations. Paradoxically, in accordance with this Treaty non-nuclear-weapon States must comply with strict verification requirements that do not apply to the nuclear-weapon States. These are the

reasons of principle that have kept my country from signing the NPT.

A firm commitment to nuclear disarmament and commitment to the use of nuclear energy for strictly peaceful purposes will continue to be basic principles of Cuba's foreign policy.

As a fresh gesture of goodwill, the Government of Cuba has decided to initiate talks with the secretariat of the IAEA to consider the possibility of incorporating in our safeguards agreements with the Agency some of the measures that have been contemplated in the Model Additional Protocol.

Once again, controversial wording on specific countries or situations has been included in the draft resolution on the report of the IAEA. It is disturbing that this has become the practice in recent years, despite the fact that this procedure does not have the support of all delegations. Since this Agency is of such great importance for the international community, the text submitted to the General Assembly on the work of the IAEA should reflect those issues that receive consensus support from delegations, as is the case for other texts adopted on other bodies or forums.

We hope that in future these concerns will duly be taken into account, and we take this opportunity to express our position of unanimous support for the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

**Mr. Reva** (Ukraine): On behalf of the Ukrainian delegation, I would like to thank Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for his comprehensive introduction of the Agency's report to the Assembly and also congratulate him on the assumption of his very important position. We wish him every success in further promoting the noble goals of the IAEA.

Since its establishment more than 40 years ago, the IAEA has made a unique contribution to promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to setting international standards for nuclear safety and the management of radioactive wastes. Thanks to its technical cooperation programmes, know-how on nuclear applications in such diverse areas as agriculture, health, industry and water-resources management has become available to a growing number of countries. Today the Agency continues to play an indispensable role in strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

However, recent developments in the sphere of non-proliferation cannot but cause legitimate concern to the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regarding the viability of the non-proliferation regime, and necessitate concerted action by them to further strengthen this regime. Therefore, Ukraine welcomes the recent accessions to the Treaty and appeals to those few States that remain outside the NPT to accede to it as soon as possible.

The safeguards systems are an integral element of the non-proliferation regime, and our goal should be the application of strengthened safeguards in all States. Ukraine ratified the comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA on 17 December 1997.

We also believe that the new Model Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreements will provide the Agency with stronger tools to verify compliance with the NPT. We are continuing to work in order to conclude the additional protocol as soon as possible.

The role of the IAEA in the field of nuclear and radiation safety is indisputable. Ukraine notes with satisfaction the Agency's efforts to enhance the safety of nuclear power plants in Central and Eastern Europe. It is quite obvious that this is a long-term task, but we should pursue it with no less determination than any other.

On 7 July 1998 the Vienna Convention on Nuclear Safety entered into force in Ukraine. As per its commitments, my country has transmitted to the States parties for their consideration the national report on Ukraine's fulfilment of its obligations under the Convention. We attach particular importance to the Convention's first review meeting, which will take place next spring.

Ukraine's delegation notes with satisfaction our country's broadening technical cooperation with the IAEA, which embraces basic activities in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We are also satisfied with the progress on implementation of technical assistance projects in Ukraine as well as with the broad involvement of our representatives in the Agency's regional technical assistance projects. All these projects are of great practical importance for our country.

The problem of the safety of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant continues to remain a focus of attention for Ukraine's Government and the whole international community. In this respect, let me briefly inform the

Assembly about the progress achieved in implementing the memorandum of understanding between the G-7, the European Commission and Ukraine that was signed in Ottawa in December 1995.

Unit 1 of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant was shut down in 1996. The preparation work for extracting the nuclear fuel from this unit is now under way. We also attach special attention to the work on the shelter construction over destroyed unit 4 within the framework of the memorandum.

In this regard, my delegation highly appreciates the decisions of the pledging conference convened last year here in New York. We are grateful to the G-7 Governments, the European Commission and Governments of other donor States, including most recently the Government of the Slovak Republic, for their pledges for the realization of the shelter implementation plan.

The decisions of the pledging conference have given a strong impetus to the practical steps aimed at the fulfilment of the memorandum. In this context, I also wish to mention that the framework agreement between Ukraine and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) relating to the activities of the Chernobyl shelter fund in Ukraine has been signed and has entered into force. The structure of the fund has been shaped, the mechanism for payments developed and the governing board of the project management unit elected, and tenders on certain groups of projects are in progress.

Presently, more than $390 million have been pledged to the Chernobyl shelter fund, and some $200 million have already been credited to the relevant EBRD account. However, $750 million are still needed to complete the shelter implementation plan. In this respect, we hope that these funds will be collected at the second pledging conference.

The memorandum provides that the completion of construction of compensatory power units is among the preconditions for the decommissioning of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. The delay in putting into operation the units at the Rivne and Khmel'nitskiy nuclear power plants is of particular concern to our Government. In view of the present situation, we must also state that Ukraine will be able to complete these energy units only on the condition that the G-7 and the European Community member States take appropriate emergency steps aimed at securing the necessary financial resources for this purpose. Otherwise, the failure of the achieved agreements regarding Chernobyl would produce a negative reaction both in Ukraine and in other States, as well as adversely affecting our common cause of the safe utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Only by joint efforts will we be able to eliminate the Chernobyl problem.

The International Atomic Energy Agency is widely regarded as a model organization. We are confident that the initiative of the Director General to set up a senior expert group to look at all aspects of the Agency's activities will strengthen this view. We believe that the IAEA can look forward to the new millennium with optimism. I wish to conclude by reiterating Ukraine's commitment to the Agency's goals.

**Mr. Sychou** (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): Our delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. ElBaradei, for the Agency's annual report on its activities.

Since its establishment, the IAEA has been called upon to deal successfully with such important international challenges as ensuring nuclear safety and organizing technical assistance to States so that they can develop nuclear research programmes. The Agency has made a significant contribution to dealing successfully with these challenges and has shown itself to be a reliable international organization which promotes the strengthening of inter-State cooperation on issues pertaining to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Achieving comprehensive compliance with the principles of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the main priorities of our Government's foreign policy. In this connection, we should add that Belarus attaches great significance to IAEA activities in this area.

Belarus is taking consistent steps towards becoming a non-nuclear State. It has ratified the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms and has adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as a non-nuclear State. It has signed a safeguards agreement with the IAEA. Another important milestone for Belarus in this regard was the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

At the end of April 1992 Belarus withdrew tactical nuclear weapons, ahead of schedule, from its territory, and in 1996 the Republic complied with the timetable for the withdrawal of nuclear strategic weapons. In this way,

the entire space of Central and Eastern Europe has been freed of nuclear weapons.

In this connection, we see it as essential to establish a non-nuclear space in Central Europe, which would enable us to consolidate the already existing non-nuclear obligations of States in the region and prevent the possibility of a new geographical spread of weapons of mass destruction.

The term "space" lends some flexibility to that idea. We believe that the "non-nuclear space" could be based on a balanced combination of legal and political, multilateral and unilateral obligations of States. It could have the participation of such countries as those which link their security to membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as neutral States. To some extent, those members of NATO having a special position with regard to nuclear weapons could join in this space.

We would especially like to emphasize that the only objective of this initiative was to find solutions to questions on the establishment and strengthening of pan-European security, and consequently international security. In this connection, the interests of all European States and security structures will be taken into account.

Belarus attaches great significance to the strengthening of the international safeguards system and is making every effort to strictly comply with the obligations it has entered into to ensure reliable protection for nuclear materials. The donor countries — the United States of America, Japan and Sweden — with coordination from the International Atomic Energy Agency, are lending Belarus significant technical assistance in establishing and improving on the Government's system of accounting and monitoring of nuclear materials.

Measurement systems have been established which allow us not only to take stock of nuclear materials but also to carry out studies and monitor transit of materials through the territory of the Republic. Like the majority of other States, Belarus is participating in the implementation of the first part of the Programme 93 + 2, giving the Agency a larger scope of information on nuclear activities and ensuring access for inspectors.

In 1997 the IAEA prepared the protocol additional to the safeguards agreement. Currently, Belarusian experts are undertaking a detailed study of the protocol. The need for such in-depth study is conditioned by the complexities of such tasks as providing sensitive information, which, in the final analysis, might affect the sovereignty of our State. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that many of the steps provided for in the protocol require individual consultations with interested States. By way of example, I could talk about agreed upon problems involving a breakdown analysis of nuclear material samples and swabs from hot chambers.

Belarus has seen from its own experience that any accident at a nuclear power plant is trans-border in nature. At the same time, we should take into account the fact that our Republic has nuclear power stations on its borders as well. In this context, recognizing the role and significance of the amended Protocol to the Vienna Convention, as worked out by the IAEA in respect to civil liability for nuclear damage, our country, having signed this Protocol, has taken yet another step in supporting closer international cooperation in the nuclear sphere at the political and industrial levels.

I would also like to point out that currently the President of the Republic of Belarus is studying another important document to strengthen the safeguards regime: the Convention on Nuclear Safety. Our Government attaches great importance to ensuring maximum radiation safety for the population of the country — which on a daily basis has to cope with the painful consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

Various steps are being taken to strengthen all aspects of radiation safety. In January 1998 a law was adopted on radiation safety for the population. This law sets out the rights and obligations of citizens subjected to radiation for medical purposes, as well as the rights and obligations of citizens exposed to radon, a natural source of radiation.

In addition, a draft law has been put forward for the consideration of the Belarus Parliament on the use of atomic energy and on radiation protection, a law which, among other things, covers such subjects as material responsibility borne by those using sources of ionizing radiation.

One of the priority areas in the activities of our State in ensuring radiation safety for the population is solving the problem of the safety of waste, a problem which emerged in the initial period following the accident at Chernobyl. Work has been concluded on modernizing and certifying the facilities for the maintenance and preservation of waste, and also to define the radionuclide components of nuclear waste. In this connection, the

IAEA's project, "Rehabilitation of EKORES radioactive waste disposal facility", is an important initiative.

Belarus notes with satisfaction the significant expansion of its relations with the IAEA in the area of technical cooperation in recent years. The policy of improving approaches of the Agency in its lending of technical assistance — taking into account national interests of States and the quality of the choice of projects chosen for their orientation towards the final user — significantly enhances the effectiveness of these plans. The Republic of Belarus supported the initiative of the IAEA on the joint realization of a pilot project to improve the infrastructure for radiation safety and waste management, and is pleased at the course of its implementation.

The involvement in this project of the plans to protect the population from ionized radiation of other countries in the region gives the project a regional nature, something which can serve as an additional impulse for development of bilateral contacts of States of the region in this area.

One important example of close and effective cooperation between Belarus and the IAEA is the implementation in Belarus of the project on the cultivation of rapeseed oil in radionuclide-contaminated areas. Economic gains produced by this initially small-scale project compelled Belarus and the IAEA to conclude an agreement in 1997 on the cultivation of rapeseed and the production of biolubricants from rapeseeds.

The cleaning up of the lands affected by the Chernobyl accident, and the commercial effect of the products which have been cultivated, involve a combination of humanitarian, economic and commercial interests. Another example of active cooperation with the IAEA is the project to modernize and enhance the quality of radioactive metrology and standardization, in the course of which we plan to establish a system of accreditation and certification, as well as secondary standards.

In the near future, major priorities for Belarus, along with the matters I have mentioned, remain the development of cooperation with the IAEA in improving nuclear medicine, the effective use of the territory affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe, and the establishment of a reliable system of emergency planning and operational reaction to nuclear accidents, in keeping with the spirit of the programme for sustainable development of our country in the next millennium.

In conclusion, the Belarusian delegation would like to express its positive view of the work of the Agency and support priority areas of its future activities. We express the hope that there will be close cooperation with the Agency in solving all problems pertaining to the peaceful uses of atomic energy.

**Mr. Hughes** (New Zealand): I shall be very brief. At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for his introduction of the Agency's report and for his skilled leadership of the Agency over the past year.

It is of great satisfaction to New Zealand that the Agency, under Mr. ElBaradei, continues to work in an efficient manner in support of nuclear non-proliferation, including through the extension of the IAEA safeguards system, and also in practical ways to enhance nuclear safety.

New Zealand regards the IAEA safeguards system as of paramount importance in fulfilling the IAEA's mission to ensure that nuclear energy is used exclusively for peaceful purposes. Having signed an additional protocol with the Agency during the General Conference in Vienna in September, New Zealand is now one of 33 countries to have concluded additional protocols to their original safeguards agreements. New Zealand's additional protocol came into effect immediately.

The safeguards system is also fundamental to the entire nuclear non-proliferation regime, which has as its cornerstone the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We reject strongly any suggestion that the Agency does not or should not have a role in countering nuclear proliferation.

New Zealand shares with many States the view that the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan constitute a severe threat to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the prospects for nuclear disarmament. New Zealand condemned these tests, as it has done in the case of all nuclear tests. Indications made recently in the General Assembly regarding signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) offer some encouragement, but we need deeds, not words, when it comes to international norms and non-proliferation. We urge India and Pakistan to stop their nuclear weapon development, to sign and ratify the

CTBT without delay and without condition, and to adhere to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon States.

It is clear that the IAEA must also continue to play a significant role in Iraq with a view to compiling the kind of clean bill of health that will enable that country to rejoin the international community. But it is equally evident that this will only happen with the full cooperation of Iraq. It is therefore of serious concern to New Zealand that the Director General has once again had to report that the Agency's inability to inspect new sites seriously weakens the ongoing monitoring and verification plan and the assurances the Agency is able to give. We support the unequivocal position taken by the Security Council in demanding that Iraq resume full cooperation with the IAEA and with the United Nations Special Commission.

It is New Zealand's view that the safeguards agreement between the IAEA and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains legally binding and in force. We noted with disappointment that the eleventh round of technical consultations held between the parties in October has again seen little progress. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to make available the information that is required to verify the completeness and correctness of its initial declaration.

New Zealand also commends the Director General for his willingness to plan ahead for the Agency's future. We regard such forward thinking as important, especially in the context of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on fissile materials early next year. New Zealand sees the Agency as having an integral part to play in the verification arrangements for such a new treaty and we will continue to take a keen interest in this and other aspects of the Agency's future work programme.

Finally, New Zealand remains a committed supporter of the Agency and its works, not all of which I have, of course, touched on today. We therefore offer the Director General and the draft resolution before us in document A/53/L.18 our full support.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I call on the representative of Slovenia to introduce a revision to draft resolution A/53/L.18.

**Mr. Türk** (Slovenia): On behalf of the sponsors, I have the honour to inform the members of the General Assembly of a revision to the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18.

When introducing the draft resolution this morning, the sponsors were of the view that it accurately reflected the activities of the Agency in the year under review. The sponsors also believed that the content of the draft resolution was balanced and that the concerns of different members were duly taken care of.

However, the wish of the sponsors is to get the broadest possible support for the draft resolution. Therefore, we studied carefully the amendment to operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution, proposed by the delegation of Iraq in document A/53/L.19. Following negotiations of cosponsors and interested delegations with the delegation of Iraq, the sponsors are now proposing a revision to operative paragraph 7.

The revision to operative paragraph 7 is as follows. In the last line of the paragraph, the word "few" should be inserted before the word "remaining". The last two lines of operative paragraph 7 will now read as follows:

> "and stresses that greater transparency by Iraq would contribute greatly to the resolution of the few remaining questions and concerns;".

The sponsors agreed on this revision on the understanding that the delegation of Iraq will withdraw its amendment, as contained in document A/53/L.19.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Iraq regarding the possible withdrawal of draft resolution A/53/L.19.

**Mr. Al-Hitti** (Iraq): In the spirit of compromise and in the light of the revision just made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18, and going along with the will of many delegations to reach a compromise text, my delegation will not insist on its amendment, contained in document A/53/L.19.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): As we have just heard, draft resolution A/53/L.19 has been withdrawn from consideration.

The following countries have joined the list of sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18: Belarus, Bulgaria, El Salvador, Greece, Luxembourg, Monaco, New Zealand and San Marino.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised. Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic on a point of order.

**Mr. Abou-Hadid** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation appeals to you, Sir, as the President of the General Assembly, and in view of the fact that you are highly skilful politically and are a Foreign Minister, to take into account the fact that the draft resolution before us for decision, which was officially circulated to us only this morning, has political implications, and delegations need instructions from their capitals. I raise this question to appeal to you once again, Sir, to postpone any action on this draft resolution during this meeting so that we may refer it to our capitals and receive instructions. This will enable us not to ignore our responsibility for awaiting instructions from our capitals with regard to voting on this draft resolution. As you know, Sir, there were consultations until 3 p.m. today on amendments presented this morning. There was an amendment which is now before us. I request that in your political capacity you take this into consideration, and appeal to the sponsors to understand the importance of postponing any decision on the draft resolution.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has requested postponement of a decision on the draft resolution. Before deciding on this point, I call on the representative of Slovenia, who has asked for the floor.

**Mr. Türk** (Slovenia): Our delegation listened very carefully to the statement by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic. Like other sponsors, we are aware of the political importance and sensitivity of the content of this draft resolution. On the other hand, we would recall that it was circulated last week; it was available to all delegations on Friday, 30 October following a period of extensive consultations in which all interested delegations had the opportunity to participate.

Furthermore, during the discussions this morning and the informal consultations which have taken place, the very constructive spirit which prevailed made it possible for the sponsors to agree with the author of the amendment to a formulation in paragraph 7, which is again a balanced and helpful arrangement. Therefore, we would most respectfully suggest that the sponsors of the draft resolution would very strongly prefer that action on it be taken now.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to remind representatives that rule 71 of the rules of procedures of the General Assembly provides that during the discussion of any matter a representative may rise to a point of order, and it shall be decided immediately by the President in accordance with the rules of procedure. A representative may appeal against the ruling of the President. The appeal shall be immediately put to the vote, and the President's ruling shall stand unless overruled by a majority of the members present and voting. A representative rising to a point of order may not speak on the substance of the matter under discussion.

**Mr. Dlamini** (Swaziland): My delegation is fully aware of the rules of procedure referred to, and it is in this spirit that we take the floor to prepare the ground for your ruling, Mr. President, because if the ground is not level the presidency may in the future be interpreted as deterring discussion; while you have that authority to rule, delegations — as per the norms and tradition of this House — reserve the right to speak, so that when you make a ruling, Sir, you base it on views expressed from the floor.

With regard to the proposal made by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, I wish to echo the sentiments and views of the Slovenian delegation. I believe the amendment was circulated early enough to facilitate and conclude consultations, and, since the sponsors of paragraph 7 have arrived at a consensus decision, I humbly appeal to the Syrian delegation, in a spirit of fraternity, to afford us the latitude to take action on this draft resolution. I do so especially since the onus was on the Syrian delegation to take quick action, as soon as the draft resolution was circulated, to consult thoroughly with its capital. I am aware that it is a matter of delicacy, but at the same time consensus is always the soul of success, and thus the Syrian delegation, my greatest friends, should consider this of paramount importance.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I thank the representative of Swaziland for his statement, from which I infer the possibility of calling on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic once again.

**Mr. Abou-Hadid** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation has not tried to place any obstacles before the adoption of this draft resolution. The work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is commended by my delegation and my country and we appreciate the efforts made by the Agency and its Director General. I have listened attentively to the statement made by the Ambassador of Slovenia on the circulation of this draft resolution on Friday. We received it this morning, not on Friday. Once again we hope that the rules of procedure of the General Assembly will always be taken into consideration. You, Mr. President, are a depositary and a guardian of the rules of procedure. We respect your ruling. I also wish to extend my personal gratitude to the Ambassador of Swaziland.

We highly appreciate his appeal, and therefore we agree not to put this matter to a vote.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am grateful to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for withdrawing the proposal he made on a point of order.

We shall now, therefore, continue our consideration of draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised. I remind members that the time for them to speak in explanation of vote before the vote is now, and that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Kim Chang Guk** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea finds it regrettable that the General Assembly is once again to vote on the same draft resolution, which is of no use at all for the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

I shall now reiterate my delegation's position on the draft resolution.

First, as my delegation has stated here time and again, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is not a question to be debated at the United Nations, but a question to be resolved between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

The United States is the party that brought nuclear weapons into South Korea and created "North Korea's nuclear suspicion" in an attempt to isolate and stifle the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of October 1994 eloquently speaks of the fact that the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is none other than a political and military issue to be settled by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States.

As for implementation of the Agreed Framework, it is essential for the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

We have, from the first days of the adoption of the Agreed Framework, frozen all the relevant nuclear facilities and put them under IAEA monitoring. We have also allowed the IAEA regular and non-regular inspection activities on the nuclear facilities which are not subject to the freeze. Therefore, as long as the nuclear facilities are under IAEA monitoring, preservation of information on our past nuclear activities is ensured.

However, the United States has not properly implemented any of its obligations under the Agreed Framework. The United States has not taken steps to lift sanctions, as an apparent effort to renounce its hostile policy towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It has been nearly a year since the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the light water reactors, but we do not know when the full construction work will begin. Failure on the part of the United States to deliver heavy oil on schedule creates additional difficulties for our economy.

Now the United States says that it is unable to fulfil its obligations under the agreement because North Korea is building a secret underground structure for a nuclear facility. This is one of the latest attempts on the part of the United States to break the Agreed Framework. We have clearly stated that we have constructed many underground structures for civil use, and, if the United States insists on clarifying this, we can show the one which the United States claims is a secret underground nuclear facility, on condition that when it is confirmed not to be a nuclear facility, the United States should pay compensation for slandering and defaming my country.

In a word, the Agreed Framework is not a favour granted by the United States to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We have frozen our independent national nuclear power industry on the premise that the United States would fulfil its obligations under the agreement. If the United States regards the Agreement as a nuisance, it is free to break it. We are not going to beg the United States not to break it. Once it is broken, we will be free to develop our independent nuclear power

industry with our own technology and resources, without relying on the inconvenient technology of others who would not readily share their technology with us.

Secondly, there cannot be full compliance with the safeguards agreement without implementation of the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. As the Director General of the IAEA said, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accepts the IAEA's activities within the context of the Agreed Framework; those activities are inseparably related to the implementation of the Agreed Framework under the agreement.

The Agreed Framework is based not on trust, but on the principle of simultaneous actions by both sides. The Agency's activities in our country are correlated with the implementation of the Agreed Framework and therefore should be conducted in proportion to the implementation of the Agreed Framework. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea does not have a unilateral obligation to allow the IAEA to conduct monitoring activities when the United States is not fulfilling its obligations under the Agreed Framework. If the Agreed Framework is broken, the Agency's activities will automatically come to an end.

In this regard, I would like to remind the Assembly that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea decided to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in March 1993, but suspended execution of that decision on condition that the United States implement the Agreed Framework.

Despite all these facts, certain countries and IAEA officials are trying to turn away from the essence of the issue by urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with the safeguards agreement. If they are really concerned for the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and our compliance with the safeguards agreement, they should not put pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, but should urge the United States, the originator of the issue, to implement the Agreed Framework. To urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with the safeguards agreement, without a single word about the failure of the United States to implement its obligations under the Agreed Framework, is nothing but the cowardly act of hypocrites bullying the weak and siding with the strong, which is not convincing to people with reason and a sense of justice.

In conclusion, my delegation will vote against the draft resolution because it will hinder rather than help the settlement of the issue. Its objective is to put pressure on us, thereby endangering the fate of the Agreed Framework. It will also damage the credibility of the United Nations.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised. A recorded vote has been requested.

*A recorded vote was taken.*

*In favour:*

Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen

*Against:*

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

*Abstaining:*

Bhutan, Botswana, China, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic, Viet Nam

*Draft resolution A/53/L.18, as orally revised, was adopted by 113 votes to 1, with 8 abstentions* (resolution 53/21).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Bolivia, Botswana, Jordan and the Russian Federation advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Manickam** (India): India, a founder member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), attaches the highest importance and value to the objectives of the Agency. Since this resolution pertains to the activities of the IAEA, we might have been able to go along with it. We did not and could not do so because we have considerable difficulty with the third and twelfth preambular paragraphs.

The language in the third preambular paragraph of document A/53/L.18 appears to link adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the freedom to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The statute of the IAEA, which must guide all our deliberations on the Agency's activities, calls on the Agency to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. Further, the statute stresses the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members. The purpose of those provisions in the statute of the IAEA is obviously to encourage the unfettered access of member States to the peaceful use of atomic energy, without any discrimination whatsoever, albeit with appropriate safeguards.

The IAEA's statute predates the NPT and, besides, the Agency has not been designated as a secretariat of the NPT. The Agency merely carries out safeguards of different member States in accordance with their agreements, and the concept of safeguards itself predates the NPT. The NPT is not an equitable Treaty. Furthermore, the provisions of article VI of the NPT have not been fulfilled by the nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, the NPT should not be used for discriminating between members of the IAEA.

*Mr. Ka (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

By implying that adherence to the NPT, on which my Government's views are well known, alone would give access to the peaceful uses of atomic energy, the resolution deviates, and in fact derogates from, the objectives enshrined in the Statute of the IAEA.

We are concerned about how the IAEA's basic objectives are being distorted with regard both to the NPT and, now, to the taking up of matters like the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which are not of any relevance to the Statute of the Agency. In meetings of both the Board of Governors and of the General Conference of the IAEA, we have repeatedly stressed that the IAEA is not the appropriate forum for a debate on nuclear testing. The place for that might be here, in the First Committee, in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva or in the still embryonic CTBT Organization in Vienna.

We have pointed out how countries that had spoken against the inclusion of an agenda item on nuclear testing in 1995 backtracked three years later when it came to the debate on nuclear testing by India and Pakistan. The resolution in 1995 was passed without naming countries, and, even though those countries carried out further nuclear tests in 1996, no criticism was made in the discussions at the Agency. That was in contrast to the action pushed through in the General Conference this year.

Paragraph B.1 of article III of the Statute of the IAEA calls for "furthering the establishment of safeguarded worldwide disarmament" — not non-proliferation, as championed by the sponsors of the resolution on nuclear testing. We have also emphasized that the IAEA, perhaps among the most scientifically oriented organizations in the United Nations system, was in danger of diluting its scientific and technical character and becoming a shadow political forum for debate at the United Nations.

We have also witnessed the unprecedented situation at the General Conference of the IAEA in September this year, when 21 of the sponsors abstained when voting on the corresponding resolution itself, and the number of abstentions almost equalled the votes in favour. It is obvious that the manner and modalities used to push through this resolution left little confidence in the minds of member States, including even many of the sponsors, as reflected in the polling.

We were, therefore, constrained to abstain on the whole draft resolution.

**Mr. Pang Sen** (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The delegation of China would like to express its appreciation to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the great deal of work it has done in the past year to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and to safeguard, monitor and prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The delegation of China is generally satisfied with the report of the IAEA, and therefore approved of most of the content of the draft resolution on the report, in document A/53/L.18. At the same time, the delegation of China has reservations with regard to the formulation of related issues in the resolution. China has always been in favour of seeking an appropriate solution to related issues through consultation and dialogue. We believe that the application of pressure or confrontation are not conducive to resolving issues. For those reasons, the delegation of China abstained in the vote on the resolution that has just been adopted on the report of the IAEA.

**Ms. Janjua** (Pakistan): Despite the considerable importance we attach to the objectives and role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the delegation of Pakistan was constrained to abstain on the vote in the draft resolution in document A/53/L.18. We were obliged to do so because of the inclusion of the twelfth preambular paragraph on nuclear testing. At the General Conference of the IAEA, Pakistan opposed the submission and adoption of resolution GC/(42)/RES/19 on nuclear testing. We believed that consideration of that issue was beyond the competence of the IAEA. Moreover, the draft resolution was discriminatory in its approach. Our position in the IAEA opposing the issue of nuclear testing was consistent with the position which Pakistan took in 1995, when a similar move was made against the nuclear tests conducted that year by two friendly nuclear-weapon States.

It is ironic that this year the nuclear sponsors of the draft resolution and their military allies felt obliged to abstain on their own draft resolution because of the inclusion of a provision calling for nuclear disarmament. The discriminatory approach adopted in the IAEA General Conference has been compounded by the insertion of a separate preambular paragraph referring to resolution GC(42)/RES.19. We recall that at the 1995 General Assembly session there was no such mention of the resolution adopted at the IAEA Conference that year regarding nuclear testing. Such discrimination is unacceptable. We would therefore have voted against this paragraph if it had been put to the vote.

We also have reservations on the third preambular paragraph and certain reservations on paragraph 9 regarding the pre-emptive assertion of a role for the Agency in combating illicit trafficking in nuclear materials. This matter, we believe, is under consideration in the Sixth Committee, and its outcome should not be prejudged.

**Mr. Abou-Hadid** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation abstained from voting on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.18, but not because of the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and its activities. In Syria, we highly appreciate the work of the Agency and its important role, under the leadership of its Director General, Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei; that role in extending assistance to States in the field of peaceful uses of energy in the course of last year was praiseworthy and commendable.

We abstained on the draft resolution because Israel has not acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Consequently, it has not been possible to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, despite the efforts of the IAEA and its previous Director General, Mr. Hans Blix, as well as of the current Director General, to whom we express our unceasing readiness to cooperate with him and the Agency to bring about the success of its work.

We are quite hopeful that these efforts in the course of next year will be wider and broader and that they will be crowned with tangible results that correspond with the aspirations of the States of the region to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The fact that only Israel in the Middle East has not acceded to the NPT, in addition to the fact that it has not declared its intention to accede to the Treaty and subject all its nuclear facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA, constitutes a danger to the region and the world. Israel's stance threatens international peace and security.

We hope that the efforts of the international community and the IAEA will succeed in urging Israel to accede to the Treaty so that, like other regions in the world, the Middle East will be free of nuclear weapons,

thereby helping to achieve stability, security and peace in the region and in the world.

With regard to the fourteenth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution on amending article VI of the statute of the Agency, my delegation is of the view that the efforts made by the Chairman of the Board of Governors to find a formula to amend article VI can provide a basis for discussion and exchange of views.

However, discussing the amendment of article VI in parallel with the composition of regional groups and within the proposals package of the Chairman will only hamper settlement of a subject that has been pending for more than two decades. It is no secret that Africa, the Middle East and South Asia look forward to finding a formula that achieves their equitable representation in the Agency, given the increasing number of States that have joined the Agency.

With regard to the composition of regional groups, this is a separate item that must be treated in accordance with the General Conference resolution, GC(39)/RES.22, which openly indicates that the primary responsibility regarding the composition of regional groups lies with the regions themselves. Therefore, it is not possible to impose a member on a specific region without the prior consent of the States of that region. The States of the Middle East and South Asia reject and continue to reject Israel's joining them. This is for objective reasons that cannot be denied — its occupation of Arab territories of some of the States of the region whose populations it evacuates and against whom it exercises violence. Moreover, Israel engages in the destruction of homes of Palestinians to build Israeli settlements. It also rejects any international initiatives to revive the peace negotiations on the principles on which these negotiations are based.

Given this situation, no cooperation can be undertaken by the members of any regional group with a view to achieving their objectives, and to securing for them maximum benefit. We believe that the discrimination which Israel alleges is practised against it is in fact discrimination experienced by the States of Africa, the Middle East and South Asia which holds the right of these States hostage to the illegal aspirations of one State.

We call upon the international community, particularly the IAEA, to compel Israel to demonstrate a full and unconditional respect for the work of the Agency and for the will of the international community by acceding to the NPT and by subjecting all its nuclear activities and facilities to the comprehensive safeguards regime of the IAEA.

**Mr. Ziaran** (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.18, which has just been adopted. However, I wish to place on record the following explanation of our vote.

Regarding the provisions of preambular paragraph 14, we strongly hold that any decision on geographical groupings in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is, and should remain, the prerogative of the members of the regional groups.

With regard to the implementation of the Model Additional Protocol relating to safeguards, to which reference is made in paragraph 3, my delegation believes firmly that the protocol should be applied equally and in a non-discriminatory manner to nuclear facilities and activities of all States members of the Agency, in particular to those of nuclear-weapon States.

**Mr. Dausá Céspedes** (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Cuba voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.18 because we feel that the substance of the text focuses on the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an agency that in our view makes an important contribution to developing countries in the sphere of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. As we said in our earlier statement, however, the resolution this year again includes elements that are extraneous to this agenda item. The delegation of Cuba wishes therefore to put on record that had separate votes been taken on certain paragraphs we would have abstained in accordance with my country's position on the resolutions to which those paragraphs make reference.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote on this item.

Before calling on the first delegation that has asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply, I wish to remind members that, in accordance with decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Kim Chang Guk** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Several countries have referred to the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula, urging my country to fully comply with the safeguards agreement

with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I do not think, however, that there is any need to respond to them, as I clearly stated the position of my delegation before the vote. But I am going to exercise my right of reply to respond to South Korea and to Japan only, because it is unbecoming of them to speak of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula.

As for the South Korean authorities, they are traitors to the nation, who have brought foreign nuclear weapons into the territory of the Korean nation. It is preposterous that the South Korean authorities should take issue with us, as if they were concerned about the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. They are begging the United States for a nuclear umbrella, which is one of the main obstacles to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is not a technical matter; it is a grave military and political one. That is why the South Korean authorities have no voice in the nuclear issue, as they have no prerogative relating to military and political matters.

The South Korean authorities are attempting to slander us, with the ulterior motive of isolating my country from the international community. They have no intention of settling the nuclear issue. The more they make a fuss and slander us, the more they reveal the meanness and vulgarity that are peculiar to traitors depending on foreign forces.

As for Japan, it consistently and arrogantly pursues the policy of nuclear armament. Japan is operating the largest reprocessing factory in the world. Successive Japanese Government ministers have claimed that it is lawful for Japan to possess nuclear weapons. In particular, we cannot overlook the fact that, with regard to the legality of the use of nuclear weapons, Japan submitted to the International Court of Justice the view that the use of nuclear weapons was not against international law. All this shows that Japan has no interest in the fair settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula. Nor is it concerned about the peace and security of the region, as it often claims; rather, it is desperately trying to find excuses for its nuclear armament. Japan's military ambition is a real threat to peace and security in the North-East Asian region. We cannot think that Japan aspires to a nuclear-free world and to peace, even though it suffered nuclear bombing in the past and talks a lot about opposing nuclear weapons. Japan should know that in order to earn the trust of neighbouring countries it must shed its arrogance and craftiness and show integrity and sincerity.

**Mr. Cho** (Republic of Korea): We listened very carefully and with great attention to the statement just made by our colleague from North Korea. Frankly, we are very disappointed in his statement; particularly, that part of it addressed to my delegation was quite disturbing. It was disturbing because it totally lacked that minimum of courtesy and civility of language that are warranted in serious debate on so important an issue as the report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We totally reject it.

If we were to go into detail and rebut him point by point, I imagine it would take several hours. I believe that is not the wish of this body, so I will refrain from reciprocating the uncivil language that was used by our colleague from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, language that is totally unacceptable to our delegation.

Secondly, we are quite disappointed, because, despite good intentions on the part of our delegation to find a new element in the intervention of the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we could not detect any indications from him that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would heed the almost consensual appeal of the international community for that country to cooperate with the IAEA for full implementation of the Agency's safeguards agreement.

During the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's statement in explanation of vote, its representative argued that his country was under no legal obligation to implement the safeguards agreement, and linked all these obligations to the Agreed Framework. But this is also unacceptable to us; we made that very clear in our statement during the debate on the IAEA report, as did many other representatives. There is no doubt that, as a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is under a legal obligation to implement the IAEA safeguards agreement. This obligation cannot be replaced by the Agreed Framework.

Of course, we support the full implementation of the Agreed Framework, because implementation is very important to peace and security on the Korean peninsula. But the Agreed Framework itself does not exonerate the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from its legal obligations under the NPT and the safeguards agreement. The Agreed Framework is the arrangement which complements and reinforces the legal obligation which the

North Koreans voluntarily undertook when they joined the NPT and when they signed the IAEA safeguards agreement.

I do not think I have to cite the resolutions which have already been adopted in many international forums. We have just adopted another resolution in the name of the United Nations calling for full cooperation by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the implementation of its safeguards agreement and expressing deep concerns over the continuing non-compliance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Having said that, we wish to appeal to our colleague from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that it become more reasonable and forthcoming in its technical discussions and interactions with the IAEA for the full implementation of the safeguards agreement, which remains in force and legally binding upon it.

**Mr. Kim Chang Guk** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is quite funny and ridiculous that traitors are teaching about patriotism. The South Koreans are really traitors who brought in nuclear weapons and are begging for a foreign nuclear umbrella. This means that they intend to invite a foreign nuclear attack on their own compatriots. They are also pursuing the objective of isolating our country from the international community. What the representative of the Republic of Korea has just said shows their ulterior intention of isolating my country from the international community. They do not even know what is happening politically and militarily on the Korean peninsula. They are now staging large-scale combined military exercises with the United States against us. I once again declare that they are traitors of the nation. It is very important for the South Koreans to reflect deeply if they calculate that they can benefit from aggravating the tension on the Korean peninsula by hindering the settlement of the nuclear issue; otherwise, they will surely repent their absurd and rash acts.

**Mr. Cho** (Republic of Korea): We listened again with great disappointment to the intervention just made by our colleague from North Korea. I do not feel I should take precious time just to refute what he has said, because he only repeated language lacking courtesy and civility. I simply reject it again for the sake of the record. But I did detect one new element — the allegation that the Republic of Korea is trying to isolate North Korea. That is incorrect, and I wish to set the record straight on this point. As on numerous occasions, particularly after the new Administration was established in the Republic of Korea, we have been very actively pursuing a comprehensive engagement policy vis-à-vis North Korea. We do not want to engage in the confrontational setting which originates from the old eras. We are trying to open a new age of reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula. The engagement policy of my new Government, which is called the Sunshine Policy, rejects the isolation of North Korea, contrary to the ghost my Korean colleague is now perceiving. We want to be cooperative and to bring North Korea into the international community for the good, well-being, prosperity and, indeed, peace, of the Korean peninsula.

Having said that, I would once again appeal to our North Korean colleagues to understand our genuine intention. We are trying to engage North Korea to open up a new era of genuine peace, reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in exercise of the right of reply.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 14?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*

United Nations A/53/PV.52

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

*Official Records*

52nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 3 November 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 47**

**Election of the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994**

**Letter from the President of the Security Council (A/53/442)**

**Memorandum by the Secretary-General, including the list of candidates (A/53/443)**

**Curricula vitae (A/53/444 and Corr.1 and Add.1)**

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): In connection with the election, I should like to bring the following matters to the attention of the General Assembly.

As members may recall, by its resolution 955 (1994) of 8 November 1994, the Security Council adopted the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda.

Elections for the judges of the two Trial Chambers of the International Tribunal for Rwanda took place in 1995. The terms of office of the six judges who were elected in those elections are due to expire on 24 May 1999.

By its resolution 1165 (1998) of 30 April 1998, the Security Council decided to establish a third Trial Chamber of the International Tribunal for Rwanda. It further decided that the elections for the three judges of the third Trial Chamber should be held together with the elections for the six judges of the two existing Trial Chambers.

Pursuant to article 12, paragraph 5, of the Statute, the judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda shall be elected for a term of four years and pursuant to paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 1165 (1998), the terms of office of the judges to be elected in the current elections will expire on 24 May 2003. The judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda are to serve on a full-time basis and cannot engage in any other occupation of a professional nature during their tenure.

Six out of the nine judges who are to be elected will take up office on 25 May 1999, following the expiration of the terms of office of the judges who currently make up the two existing Trial Chambers of the International Tribunal. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 1165 (1998), the Security Council decided that, as an exceptional measure, three out of the nine newly elected judges, who would be designated by the Secretary-General in consultation with the President of the International Tribunal, were to commence their terms of office as soon as possible following the elections in order that the new third Trial Chamber created by that resolution might begin to function at the earliest possible date.

98-86290 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

According to article 12, paragraph 3, of the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, the judges of the Trial Chambers of the International Tribunal for Rwanda shall be elected by the General Assembly from a list of candidates submitted by the Security Council.

At its 3934th meeting, on 30 September 1998, the Security Council, in accordance with article 12, subparagraph 3 (c), of the Statute of the International Tribunal, established in resolution 1200 (1998) a list of 18 candidates, taking due account of the adequate representation of the principal legal systems of the world. The list was formally conveyed to the President of the General Assembly by letter dated 30 September 1998 from the President of the Security Council. That letter was issued as document A/53/442.

In accordance with article 12, subparagraph 3 (d), of the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, the Holy See and Switzerland, two non-member States, shall participate in the election in the same manner as the States Members of the United Nations. On this occasion, I am happy to welcome here the representatives of the Holy See and Switzerland.

Finally, I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the documents relating to the election. The memorandum by the Secretary-General concerning the election of judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda is contained in document A/53/443. The list of candidates is to be found in paragraph 11 of that document.

The curricula vitae of the candidates are to be found in document A/53/444 and corrigendum 1 and addendum 1. In that connection, may I bring to the Assembly's attention the provision of article 12, paragraph 1, of the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, which stipulates that judges of the Tribunal shall be persons of high moral character, impartiality and integrity who possess the qualifications required in their respective countries for appointment to the highest judicial offices. According to the same provision, due account shall be taken in the overall composition of the Chambers of the Tribunal of the experience of the judges in criminal law, international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law.

As representatives know, the election of judges will take place in accordance with the relevant provisions of article 12 of the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda.

In addition, given the similar nature of the election of judges of the International Court of Justice and the election of judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, the Secretary-General suggests in his memorandum that similar election procedures be followed in the General Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to that suggestion?

*It was so decided.*

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with article 12, subparagraph 3 (d), of the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, the candidates who receive an absolute majority of the votes of States Members of the UnitedNations and of the non-member States maintaining permanent observer missions at United Nations Headquarters will be declared elected.

The consistent practice of the United Nations has been to interpret the words "absolute majority" as meaning a majority of all electors, whether or not they vote or are allowed to vote. The electors, for this purpose, are all 185 Member States and the two non-member States, namely, the Holy See and Switzerland. Accordingly, 94 votes constitute an absolute majority for the purpose of electing judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda.

If, in the first ballot, the number of candidates obtaining an absolute majority is less than nine, a second ballot will be held, and balloting will continue in the same meeting, if and as necessary, until nine candidates have obtained an absolute majority. In any second or subsequent ballot, each elector may vote for no more than nine candidates less the number of candidates who have already obtained absolute majorities.

It is further suggested that if in the first ballot more than nine candidates obtain an absolute majority of votes, a second ballot will be held on all candidates and balloting will continue at the same meeting, if and as necessary, until nine candidates, and no more, obtain an absolute majority.

Following the practice in the election of judges of the International Court of Justice, the Secretary-General suggests in his memorandum that subsequent balloting should be unrestricted; I repeat, that subsequent balloting should be unrestricted. Votes may accordingly be cast in

any second or subsequent ballot for any eligible candidate who has not yet obtained an absolute majority.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to the procedures I have just outlined?

*It was so decided.*

**Mr. Tello** (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Once again the Mexican delegation will not be participating in the election of the judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Mexico considers that in establishing that Tribunal the Security Council exceeded its sphere of competence, since in the Charter of the United Nations there is no explicit provision authorizing it to establish jurisdictional mechanisms of this nature.

Mexico is convinced that once the International Criminal Court becomes operational — a Court whose establishment process is indeed in accordance with international law — the creation of new special tribunals will be unnecessary.

Notwithstanding these comments, Mexico will continue to make timely contributions to the financing of the Tribunal in strict compliance with the relevant decisions of the General Assembly.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the Observer of the Holy See.

**Archbishop Martino** (Holy See): In 1994 the world was shocked by the genocide that killed almost half a million people in Rwanda. The Holy See, and especially Pope John Paul II, deplored the blind violence and appealed for an end to massacres and other atrocities perpetrated even inside churches, where innocent and disarmed people sought refuge.

Justice delayed is not merely justice denied. Any delay leading to a culture of impunity might seriously and adversely affect the healing process and could become a source of further vengeance and violence. The role of the International Tribunal in a country such as Rwanda, which is torn apart by genocide and ethnic conflicts but still aspires to lasting peace and prosperity, is important and irreplaceable.

In recent months, the International Tribunal for Rwanda has made considerable progress in bringing some of the perpetrators of genocide to justice. Still, the Tribunal requires more efficiency and more speed for its remaining work.

The Holy See welcomes the provisions of the Statute of the Tribunal, as amended on 30 April 1998, in article 12, subparagraphs 3 (a) and 3 (d), which acknowledge the Holy See's active participation in the establishment of the Tribunal and in the election of its judges, as a non-Member State maintaining a Permanent Observer Mission at the United Nations.

However, in consideration of its specific nature and objectives as a sovereign international entity, and in accordance with the recognized practice in similar cases, the Holy See has decided to abstain from casting its vote on individual candidates for the office of judge of the International Tribunal. Still, the Holy See wishes to emphasize the norms set in the Statute of the Tribunal concerning the qualification of judges, namely, that they shall be persons of high moral character, impartiality and integrity.

The Holy See expresses its confidence in the choices that will be made by the international community and offers its sincere best wishes for success to the elected judges in their service to the cause of justice. It is the hope of the Holy See that, through more efficient and expeditious action of the Tribunal, the healing process in Rwanda will continue and reconciliation and peace will be achieved.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): We shall now proceed with the election.

The voting process has now begun.

Representatives are requested to use only the ballot papers now being distributed. Only those candidates whose names appear on the ballot papers are eligible for election. Representatives will indicate the nine candidates for whom they wish to vote by placing crosses to the left of their names on the ballot papers. Ballot papers on which more than nine names are marked will be considered invalid. Votes may be cast only for those whose names appear on the ballot papers.

*At the invitation of the President, Ms. Samah (Algeria), Mr. Giroux (Canada), Mrs. Reza (Indonesia), Ms. Cardoze (Panama) and Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine) acted as tellers.*

*A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

*The meeting was suspended at 10.35 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.*

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): The result of the voting is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of ballot papers: | 173 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 173 |
| Abstentions: | 1 |
| Number of members voting: | 172 |
| Required majority: | 94 |
| Number of votes obtained: | |
| Ms. Navanethem Pillay (South Africa) | 129 |
| Mr. Laïty Kama (Senegal) | 125 |
| Mr. Dionysios Kondylis (Greece) | 112 |
| Mr. Mehmet Güney (Turkey) | 109 |
| Mr. Pavel Dolenc (Slovenia) | 102 |
| Mr. William Sekule (United Republic of Tanzania) | 100 |
| Mr. Yakov Ostrovsky (Russian Federation) | 98 |
| Mr. Erik Møse (Norway) | 97 |
| Mr. Lloyd George Williams (Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis) | 79 |
| Mr. Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardena (Sri Lanka) | 77 |
| Mr. Aka Edoukou Jean-Baptiste Kablan (Côte d'Ivoire) | 75 |
| Ms. Eugénie Liliane Arivony (Madagascar) | 69 |
| Mr. Willy C. Gaa (Philippines) | 66 |
| Mr. Salifou Fomba (Mali) | 61 |
| Ms. Indira Rana (Nepal) | 53 |
| Mr. Cheick Dimkinsedo Ouédraogo (Burkina Faso) | 50 |
| Mr. Bouba Mahamane (Niger) | 40 |
| Mr. Tilahun Teshome (Ethiopia) | 34 |

*Having obtained an absolute majority, the following candidates were elected members of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Mr. Pavel Dolenc, Mr. Mehmet Güney, Mr. Laïty Kama, Mr. Dionysios Kondylis, Mr. Erik Møse, Mr. Yakov Ostrovsky, Ms. Navanethem Pillay and Mr. William Sekule.*

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): There remains one seat to be filled. The Assembly will now proceed to another ballot to fill the remaining vacancy. In accordance with the decision taken earlier, that ballot shall be unrestricted.

Ballot papers will now be distributed. All the candidates whose names appear on the ballot paper are eligible. I remind delegations that the name of only one candidate should be marked with a cross. Any ballot on which more than one name is marked will be considered invalid. Votes may be cast only for those whose names appear on the ballot paper.

*At the invitation of the President, Ms. Samah (Algeria), Mr. Giroux (Canada), Mrs. Reza (Indonesia), Ms. Cardoze (Panama) and Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine) acted as tellers.*

*A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

*The meeting was suspended at 12.25 p.m. and resumed at 1.20 p.m.*

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): The result of the voting is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of ballot papers: | 174 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 3 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 171 |
| Abstentions: | 1 |
| Number of members voting: | 170 |
| Required majority: | 94 |
| Number of votes obtained: | |
| Mr. Lloyd George Williams (Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis) | 52 |
| Mr. Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardena (Sri Lanka) | 38 |
| Mr. Aka Edoukou Jean-Baptiste Kablan (Côte d'Ivoire) | 23 |
| Mr. Willy C. Gaa (Philippines) | 21 |
| Ms. Eugénie Liliane Arivony (Madagascar) | 15 |
| Mr. Salifou Fomba (Mali) | 8 |
| Mr. Cheick Dimkinsedo Ouédraogo (Burkina Faso) | 6 |
| Mr. Bouba Mahamane (Niger) | 4 |
| Ms. Indira Rana (Nepal) | 2 |
| Mr. Tilahun Teshome (Ethiopia) | 1 |

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): Since no candidate has obtained an absolute majority, the Assembly will have to proceed to another unrestricted ballot to fill the remaining vacancy.

**Mr. Traoré** (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): In order to facilitate the next round of voting, the delegation of Burkina Faso has decided to withdraw the candidacy of Mr. Cheick Dimkinsedo Ouédraogo.

**Mr. Joseph** (Niger) (*interpretation from French*): In view of the results of the latest round of voting, and in order to facilitate the next, the delegation of the Niger

also wishes to withdraw its candidate, Mr. Bouba Mahamane.

**Mr. Ouane** (Mali) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Mali announces the withdrawal of its candidate, in view of the outcome of the balloting.

**Mr. Shah** (Nepal): In order to facilitate the next round of voting, I wish to inform the Assembly that it is the wish of my candidate to have her name withdrawn from the next ballot paper.

**Mr. Taye** (Ethiopia): In the same spirit as other delegations have done, Ethiopia, too, wishes to withdraw its candidate.

**The President** (*interpretation from Spanish*): Members have heard the statements just made by the representatives of Burkina Faso, the Niger, Mali, Nepal and Ethiopia. I take it that the representatives of Burkina Faso, the Niger, Mali, Nepal and Ethiopia are informing the General Assembly that their respective candidates have decided to withdraw their names from the list of candidates. The names of Mr. Cheick Dimkinsedo Ouédraogo, Mr. Bouba Mahamane, Mr. Salifou Fomba, Ms. Indira Rana and Mr. Tilahun Teshome will be deleted from the next ballot paper.

In view of the lateness of the hour, we will continue with the balloting this afternoon.

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was suspended at 1.25 p.m. and resumed at 3.10 p.m.*

**The Acting President:** As announced this morning, the General Assembly will now proceed to another unrestricted ballot to fill the remaining vacancy.

I should like to remind members that the representatives of Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, Nepal and the Niger announced earlier that the candidates from their respective countries, namely, Mr. Salifou Fomba (Mali), Mr. Bouba Mahamane (Niger), Mr. Cheick Dimkinsedo Ouédraogo (Burkina Faso), Ms. Indira Rana (Nepal) and Mr. Tilahun Teshome (Ethiopia) had decided to withdraw their names from the list of candidates.

Accordingly, the ballot papers that are going to be distributed do not contain those names.

We shall now proceed with the election.

The voting process has now begun.

Representatives are requested to use only the ballot papers now being distributed. Only those candidates whose names appear on the ballot papers are eligible for election. Representatives will indicate the one candidate for whom they wish to vote by placing a cross to the left of one name on the ballot papers. Ballot papers on which more than one name is marked will be considered invalid. Votes may be cast only for those whose names appear on the ballot papers.

*At the invitation of the President, Ms. Samah (Algeria), Mr. Giroux (Canada), Mrs. Reza (Indonesia), Ms. Cardoze (Panama) and Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine) acted as tellers.*

*A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

*The meeting was suspended at 3.25 p.m. and resumed at 3.45 p.m.*

**The Acting President:** The result of the voting is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of ballot papers: | 164 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 164 |
| Abstentions: | 1 |
| Number of members voting: | 163 |
| Required majority: | 94 |
| Number of votes obtained: | |
| Mr. Lloyd George Williams (Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis) | 64 |
| Mr. Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardena (Sri Lanka) | 35 |
| Mr. Aka Edoukou Jean-Baptiste Kablan (Côte d'Ivoire) | 34 |
| Mr. Willy C. Gaa (Philippines) | 17 |
| Ms. Eugénie Liliane Arivony (Madagascar) | 13 |

**The Acting President:** Since no candidate has obtained an absolute majority, the Assembly will have to proceed to another unrestricted ballot to fill the remaining vacancy.

**Mr. Bakoniarivo** (Madagascar) (*interpretation from French*): In view of the results of the third round of voting, the delegation of Madagascar has decided to withdraw the candidacy of its national.

**The Acting President:** Members have heard the statement just made by the representative of Madagascar. I take it that the representative of Madagascar is informing the General Assembly that the candidate from his country has decided to withdraw her name from the list of candidates. The name of Ms. Eugénie Liliane Arivony will be deleted from the next ballot paper.

We will suspend the meeting for a few minutes.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4 p.m.*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now proceed to a fourth ballot to fill the remaining vacancy. In accordance with the decision taken earlier, that ballot shall be unrestricted.

Ballot papers will now be distributed. All the candidates whose names appear on the ballot paper are eligible. Once again, I remind delegations that the names of only one candidate should be marked with a cross. Any ballot on which more than one name is marked will be considered invalid. Votes may be cast only for those whose names appear on the ballot paper.

*At the invitation of the President, Ms. Samah (Algeria), Mr. Giroux (Canada), Mrs. Reza (Indonesia), Ms. Cardoze (Panama) and Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine) acted as tellers.*

*A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

*The meeting was suspended at 4.15 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.*

**The Acting President:** The result of the voting is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of ballot papers: | 166 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 166 |
| Abstentions: | 1 |
| Number of members voting: | 165 |
| Required majority: | 94 |
| Number of votes obtained: | |
| Mr. Lloyd George Williams (Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis) | 87 |
| Mr. Aka Edoukou Jean-Baptiste Kablan (Côte d'Ivoire) | 37 |
| Mr. Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardena (Sri Lanka) | 31 |
| Mr. Willy C. Gaa (Philippines) | 10 |

**The Acting President**: Once again, no candidate has obtained an absolute majority and the Assembly will now have to proceed to another restricted ballot to fill the remaining vacancy.

**Ms. Ramiro-Lopez** (Philippines): My delegation would like to withdraw its candidate and would like to thank those delegations that have supported us.

**Mr. Nakkawita** (Sri Lanka): My delegation would like to withdraw the candidature of Mr. Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardena, the Sri Lanka nominee for election to the Rwanda Tribunal. In doing so, we are most grateful to all the countries that have voted for us in the various rounds. But for the sake of reaching an early decision, we would at this stage like to withdraw our candidate.

**The Acting President:** Members have heard the statements by the representatives of the Philippines and of Sri Lanka informing the General Assembly that Mr. Willy C. Gaa from the Philippines and Mr. Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardena from Sri Lanka have decided to withdraw their names from the list of candidates established by the Security Council. Accordingly, those names should be deleted from the ballot papers.

In view of the fact that new ballots have to be prepared to take into account the withdrawals just announced, I would suggest that the Assembly again suspend our meeting and resume in five minutes to proceed with the fifth round of balloting.

May I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

*It was so decided.*

*The meeting was suspended at 4.35 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.*

**The Acting President:** The Assembly will now proceed to a fifth round of balloting to fill the remaining vacancy.

The voting process has now begun.

Representatives are again requested to use only the ballot papers now being distributed. Only those candidates whose names appear on the ballot papers are eligible for election. May I remind delegations to indicate the one candidate for whom they wish to vote by placing a cross to the left of one name on the ballot paper. Any

ballot paper on which more than one name is marked will be considered invalid. Votes may be cast only for those whose names appear on the ballot paper.

*At the invitation of the President, Ms. Samah (Algeria), Mr. Giroux (Canada), Mrs. Reza (Indonesia), Ms. Cardoze (Panama) and Mr. Herasymenko (Ukraine) acted as tellers.*

*A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

*The meeting was suspended at 5 p.m. and resumed at 5.20 p.m.*

**The Acting President**: The result of the voting is as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of ballot papers: | 167 |
| Number of invalid ballots: | 0 |
| Number of valid ballots: | 167 |
| Abstentions: | 2 |
| Number of members voting: | 165 |
| Required majority: | 94 |
| Number of votes obtained: | |
| Mr. Lloyd George Williams (Jamaica and Saint Kitts and Nevis) | 119 |
| Mr. Aka Edoukou Jean-Baptiste Kablan (Côte d'Ivoire) | 46 |

*Having obtained an absolute majority, Mr. Lloyd George Williams was elected a member of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.*

**The Acting President:** The nine judges elected today shall serve a term of office of four years, that is, until 24 May 2003.

Six out of the nine judges will take up office on 25 May 1999, following the expiration of the terms of office of the judges who currently make up the two existing Trial Chambers of the International Tribunal.

Three out of the nine judges, who will be designated by the Secretary-General in consultation with the President of the International Tribunal, are to commence their terms of office as soon as possible following the elections in order that the new, third Trial Chamber may begin to function at the earliest possible date.

The International Tribunal for Rwanda has thus been fully established.

I take this opportunity to extend to the judges the congratulations of the Assembly on their election and to thank the tellers for their kind assistance.

This concludes our consideration of agenda item 47.

*The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.*

United Nations A/53/PV.53

# General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

*Official Records*

**53**rd plenary meeting
Wednesday, 4 November 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

*President*: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Natural disasters in the Central American States**

**The Acting President:** Before turning to the item on our agenda this morning, may I, on behalf of the members of the Assembly and on my own behalf, extend to the Governments and the peoples of the Central American countries recently struck by a disastrous hurricane our deepest sympathy for the tragic loss of life and extensive material damage.

May I also express the hope that the international community will demonstrate its solidarity by responding promptly and generously to any request from those countries for assistance in their present plight.

**Agenda item 168**

**Dialogue among civilizations**

**Draft resolution (A/53/L.23/Rev.1)**

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1.

**Mr. Zarif** (Islamic Republic of Iran): The founders of our Organization enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations the common aspirations of the whole of humanity and, indeed, their determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in their lifetime had brought untold sorrow to mankind. They sought to do so by practising tolerance and living together in peace with one another as good neighbours, by promoting justice and respect for the rule of law and by reaffirming their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

As we the people of the United Nations look back and take stock of half a century of the Charter's existence, together with achievements — historic as they are — including the very establishment of this Organization, we see dark episodes of bigotry, exclusion, confrontation and bloodshed. With their extremely high toll of human lives and on the human spirit, such episodes have occurred in the era of the United Nations Charter, following two atrocious world wars which gave rise to a global commitment to arrest that trend. The last decade of the twentieth century has had more than its share of genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, challenging the very ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

But I submit to the Assembly that these are aberrations, not the norm. Indeed, the last decades of this millennium since the advent of the United Nations have

98-86302 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

been characterized by a universal desire to promote peace, tolerance and understanding and ensure social, economic and political development through international cooperation and solidarity. This in itself is an achievement of unparalleled proportions, as if the horror of all the wars of the past provided the background for the world community to embrace those Charter principles.

Certainly, such progress has not come easily, since old habits fade only after resistance and friction. It should thus come as no surprise that today, when the international community has a real and unique opportunity to break away from cold-war habits of domination and exclusion, ideas and theories are being put forward to institutionalize and even to sanctify and thus perpetuate the mentality associated with rivalries and conflicts of the past. They do so by elevating the confrontation between rival political and economic interests to the level of the irreconcilability of civilizations and of their inevitable clash.

It is evident that on the eve of the new millennium the world cannot afford to begin a new chapter in its life with such dangerous ideas, which give rise to intolerance and ignore the ever-growing web of interaction among nations in an increasingly interdependent world.

The revolution in communications, which has transformed the very concept of distance, provides us with a historic opportunity to enter the next century with a common resolve to minimize misunderstandings and misperceptions, utilizing the strengths of human diversity to face common challenges and advance common interests.

President Khatami's initiative to promote and facilitate dialogue among civilizations promises to provide a suitable framework for expanding the horizons for such constructive and enriching interaction among peoples of various origins and persuasions. Central to this framework is the premise that the diversity of humankind is and has always been a source of strength and not a reason for division. This would allow the process to encompass all nations and peoples regardless of their race, colour, creed or national origin. The international community has indicated its willingness to embrace this idea as it hopes to provide a fresh approach to a better tomorrow for humanity.

Violence is said to be the ultimate manifestation of inarticulateness. Dialogue among civilizations is thus a call stemming from the collective wisdom of man to avoid violence, in its broadest sense, through better articulation of differing ideas, visions and aspirations. The nature of such a dialogue is intellectual and cultural in essence. It postulates that the gift of diversity among people ought to be recognized and explored through interaction and communication. While managing the diversity among nations is likely to remain among the most challenging tasks confronting the international community, dialogue and interaction are indispensable for any accomplishment in this respect.

Great civilizations throughout human history have flourished through a collective process of endeavour and interaction of people and nations with diverse cultures and orientations. Various civilizations in the span of history and geography have contributed, in one way or another, to the progressive development of human society as a whole. They have learned from each other, have affected and influenced each other and at times have competed with each other. A close reading of human history would indicate that, notwithstanding formidable obstacles to constructive interaction among nations imposed by episodes and manifestations of intolerance and war, civilizations have always managed to benefit and thrive through communication and mutual enrichment, while preserving their individual identities. Thus, the achievements of different civilizations, constitute the collective heritage of mankind. By the same token, the benefits of interaction among civilizations have and will continue to be extended to all.

Given the fundamental role of culture in shaping political and economic structures, the promotion of dialogue among various cultures, on the basis of tolerance and respect for diversity, would result in the reduction of tensions and contribute to international peace and security. Dialogue by itself would not guarantee the eradication of the evils of war and bigotry. But it does provide a reasonable and sound paradigm to approach the global problems likely to confront us in the twenty-first century.

It is thus imperative that each and every member of the international community — Governments, the United Nations system, international and non-governmental organizations — take part in the process of promoting and facilitating dialogue among civilizations. This will require first and foremost the active engagement and participation of scholars, philosophers, intellectuals, artists and historians, among others. They are indeed the proper agents and immediate beneficiaries of dialogue and exchange, and they are undoubtedly cognizant and convinced of its merits. A cursory search on the Internet reveals a multitude of primarily non-governmental

organizations in practically every country that have a wealth of experience in one or another aspect of inter-civilizational dialogue and that aim to foster peace and understanding. Collective thinking and interactive reinforcement would pave the way towards common goals of peace, security, freedom, tolerance and justice.

As I indicated earlier, mutually beneficial interactions among civilizations have always existed and been carried through by visionary men and women despite all odds. The United Nations itself was built around this notion to bridge the divide between nations united under the Charter and to promote peace and understanding through an inclusive process of dialogue and interaction. The significance of our exercise today, in this Assembly, is to confirm at the political level the universal recognition and endorsement of the virtues, the wisdom and, indeed, the inescapable imperative of dialogue among civilizations for the growth of human life. Our aggregate support for the notion of dialogue among civilizations will help in rendering it all the more forceful a reality.

The proposal of President Khatami to designate the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations seeks to express the collective resolve of the international community to begin the new millennium with a fresh approach to global interactions and a determination to build a better tomorrow for future generations based on a new paradigm of understanding and mutual respect. His vision was shared by many other world leaders, including our Secretary-General, who have also spoken of the need for greater understanding among nations, cultures and civilizations. Judging from the statements made in this Hall, the timing for the adoption of the proposal is impeccable.

This proposal has also found support in other international forums. It may be recalled that the Tehran Declaration of the Eighth Islamic Summit Conference emphasized

> "the imperative of positive interaction, dialogue and understanding among cultures and religions; and [rejected] the theories of clash and conflict which breed mistrust and diminish the grounds for peaceful interaction among nations". *(A/53/72, annex II, p. 34)*

Furthermore, the Final Document of the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Durban, South Africa, announced that

> "the Heads of State or Government expressed their concern at attempts to suggest divisions between cultures and civilizations ... and expressed their resolve to facilitate and promote enhanced dialogue between cultures and civilizations at the turn of the millennium." *(chap. I, para. 43)*

The time has now come for the General Assembly, as the sole universal body encompassing representatives of nearly every nation on earth, to designate the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is thus a great honour and privilege to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.23/Rev.1, which seeks to take the first step in this regard and lay the foundation for institutionalizing, promoting and facilitating dialogue among civilizations. I do so on behalf of the sponsors of this draft resolution, namely, according to the list that I have, Afghanistan, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of Korea, Denmark, Egypt, Fiji, Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, the Sudan, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yemen and my own country.

The draft resolution, in addition to designating the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations, reaffirms the purposes and principles of the Charter, recognizes the diverse civilizational achievements of mankind, emphasizes the importance of tolerance, and invites Governments, the United Nations system, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and other international and non-governmental organizations to initiate policies aimed at facilitating dialogue and exchange and to adopt appropriate programmes, such as public awareness campaigns, seminars and conferences to promote dialogue among civilizations.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and other sponsors of this draft resolution are confident that all Member States have given this concept and the draft resolution due consideration and are in a position to lend their unanimous support, taking a resolute and historic first step towards the institutionalization of dialogue, providing

future generations with a sound and firm point of departure to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

With this, we are solemnly declaring that it is the hope and indeed the determination of the multitude of cultures and civilizations which today form the peoples of the United Nations that the third millennium will be one of dialogue and not of clash, one of articulation and not of violence.

**Mr. Ka** (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): We live in a world that is both unique and diverse, and that is rich in its cultural and civilizational diversity. The globalization of what is at stake and of the challenges that face mankind as the century draws to a close makes it more vital than ever before to build a unified world: a world of dialogue, and not of confrontation.

Decades ago, the first President of independent Senegal, the poet and academician Léopold Sédar Senghor, put forward the concept of a "civilization of the universal" that would be a place for give and take, where every people, every nation, every country, every region, every culture would give to others the best of its own and in return receive from others the best of what they have to share. It would be a place where civilizations were open to influences from other civilizations. It would be crucible of enriching contributions from other civilizations, yielding a pan-human civilization. This notion of a civilization of the universal and of brotherhood among cultures, races and traditions is more timely than ever.

On the eve of the third millennium, the globalization of the economy, of culture and of thought and increasing interdependence among nations oblige us to form a new vision of international relations that excludes confrontation, racial hatred and xenophobia. The wealth of the world is its diversity. But its future strength remains subject to its ability to cultivate a spirit of peace, tolerance, dialogue and solidarity among its various components.

My delegation has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1, on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, precisely because of this concept of relationships among the Earth's nations and individuals, and in conformity with our traditional openness and respect for the traditions and customs of others. Dialogue, with a patient determination to reach dynamic compromise, has always been a constant of Senegal's foreign policy.

The only solution for the international community is negotiation and the harmonization of concepts and ideas — in brief, dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions. The world needs a culture based on what we have in common and on pan-humanism. This need is all the more critical for the future development of the world because of the lessons we have learned from the history of society and of humanity. How many wars could have been avoided had a spirit of understanding, dialogue, tolerance and forgiveness had prevailed? That is true of past conflicts, just as it is true of the armed confrontations of the present day.

There is no intermediate option between the two alternatives: dialogue among civilizations on the one hand and confrontation among civilizations on the other. Dialogue among civilizations is possible and desirable, for it is neither possible nor desirable to impose uniformity on cultures and civilizations. The United Nations, where every day finds men and women from all cultures and civilizations side by side, remains the ideal framework for promoting, strengthening and consolidating the right to be different, and above all the culture of dialogue — and dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

By designating the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, our universal Organization would make a major contribution to our common struggle for peace, development and solidarity.

In conclusion, my delegation takes this opportunity to congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran on its welcome initiative to bring this agenda item before the General Assembly for discussion.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt): I would like to start by thanking the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative in requesting the inscription of this important item on dialogue among civilizations on the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, and for the preparation of the draft resolution on this issue which is before us today.

The importance of our discussion today is not only due to the fact that the subject matter is an extremely important one that was referred to by many leaders during the general debate of the fifty-third session, but also because its discussion in the General Assembly during this session, and at this time in particular, reflects a determined will to enter the new millennium with a new common approach based on common objectives and

common understandings that are not divided by intellectual, cultural and religious ideologies and beliefs. This determined will is based on the strong foundation of the United Nations Charter, which in Article 1, paragraph 3, states among the purposes of the United Nations,

> "To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

It is also based on article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which says,

> "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Immediately after the end of the cold war in the late 1980s, some spoke of "the clash of civilizations". Debate about this theory continues. It is a debate on humanity and the course it will chart for itself — whether conflict and conflagration or coexistence and peace. We, the representatives of the international community here assembled in the United Nations, cannot and should not, at this historical juncture, ignore such a dangerous argument and destructive theory that runs counter to the common work and collective obligations we agreed upon for international life. We, the children of the twentieth century, must deal with this theory and respond to it clearly.

In our opinion, we must go into the next millennium fully confident that we are one community based on pluralism — intellectual, religious and cultural pluralism and diversity. We must reaffirm that this diversity does not prejudice the unity of the international community. Rather, it strengthens that unity, making the international community a dynamic whole based on healthy competition, positive coexistence and a common appreciation for the achievements of the many societies that constitute the international community. As Foreign Minister Amre Moussa stated in his statement before the General Assembly at this session,

> "Our community cannot be dependent on the achievements of one single society or tend to follow one single culture. The true path lies in positive interaction, complementarity and coexistence among civilizations. It does not lie in the creation of causes for conflict or in fanning the flames of confrontation and of clash between civilizations. If this is allowed to happen, it will create a dangerous hotbed of world tension and will ultimately result in a grave loss for one and all." (*A/53/PV.15, p. 15*)

Once again we are at a historical juncture where a strong message from our generation is indeed necessary. This is the time and the place for such a message. We want to see the rights of peoples and nations upheld without differences as to priorities and definitions. We want our common political action to be established without double standards. We want rational disarmament and an end to the arms race and to the development of weapons of mass destruction, without distinction or discrimination. We want genuine development which does not entrench poverty or ignore its causes. We want a clean environment, science which benefits all and technology whose achievements and applications are beneficial to all. We want a common position in the face of international terrorism. We want freedom and liberation for all peoples and a firm stand in the face of the forces of oppression, racism and occupation. We want a commitment to the rule of law and respect for the established norms and for the purposes and principles we consecrated in the United Nations Charter.

In order to achieve such results, dialogue among civilizations is essential to enhance the concepts of coexistence and tolerance and to reduce hatred and mistrust. It is our firm belief that if each civilization becomes aware of the specificities of other civilizations within a rational dialogue, this will open the door wide for better understanding and much more coexistence and, most of all, will contribute to maintaining international peace and security.

In entering such a dialogue, we have to emphasize that no civilization has supremacy over another and that dialogue should be based on the equality of civilizations, regardless of how long they have existed, how developed they are, how much they have achieved and how strong their beliefs and ideologies are. This is the cornerstone of the success of such a dialogue.

Egypt, which belongs to several civilizations — African, Arab, Islamic and contemporary — has always believed in dialogue, not only within civilizations but also, and more importantly, among peoples of different civilizations. For this purpose and in order to confirm our commitment to and enthusiasm for initiating such a dialogue, Egypt decided to co-sponsor the draft resolution on this agenda item, which calls for concerted international efforts by Governments, the United Nations

system and other relevant international and non-governmental organizations to plan and implement appropriate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations.

We hope that Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations will spare no effort in advancing the celebration of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, a dialogue that would serve the whole international community.

**Mr. Moushoutas** (Cyprus). My delegation wishes to express its appreciation and commend the delegation of Iran for the inscription on the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly of the important item "Dialogue among civilizations". We consider the inscription timely and the idea visionary, because it gives us a fresh opportunity in this historic period for mankind to renew our resolve to promote, facilitate and enhance dialogue, which forms the cornerstone of the Charter of the United Nations.

We are on the threshold of a new millennium, visualizing a world that is even more interdependent and technologically oriented than at present and where every aspect of human interchange — political, economic and social — is globalized. A local crisis in a place far removed from our borders or shores unfailingly and immediately affects us all. We are part, it seems, of the same global village, where our actions or omissions and our deeds or misdeeds affect everyday life everywhere. Distances are disappearing, and close interaction is ever present and ever growing.

In such a world, promoting cooperation, tolerance and understanding through dialogue is not only a lofty ideal and a good policy; it is an imperative choice for survival. The world has experienced much destruction and human misery in the present millennium. Common sense dictates that the calamities which we have brought upon ourselves in the past — and some in the present — be avoided and that peace and cooperation replace confrontation and wars.

It is imperative, therefore, that we strengthen the bonds of the common destiny of mankind. The item under consideration aims at this lofty goal. The Charter of the United Nations considers dialogue as the *sine qua non* means for harmonizing human relations and resolving the differences among States which are bound to arise. The Charter therefore places dialogue on the highest peak of human endeavours aimed at the effective solution of international problems.

We therefore consider the initiative of the President of Iran, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, wise, visionary and, as we said earlier, timely. It is time to institutionalize dialogue among peoples of different cultures and civilizations if we are to serve the cause of peace and justice.

We need to be informed of the benefits of cultural pluralism and the mutual enrichment of civilizations. It is time also to address concerns over tendencies to portray specific religions and cultures as threats to peace and coexistence.

Our survival ultimately depends on our success in convincing the international community to peacefully settle differences and disputes through dialogue in accordance with the principles of the United Nations and to promote dialogue as the accepted mode of behaviour.

It is through dialogue that my Government is striving to reach a solution to the problem of Cyprus whereby the two communities — Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots — can live in peace and harmony, as they have done for centuries in the past.

It is with these thoughts in mind that we have co-sponsored draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1, introduced by Iran. It contains the necessary elements for institutionalizing dialogue among civilizations by organizing and implementing cultural, educational and social programmes by Governments and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, we fully support designating the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and we pray that the next millennium will indeed be one of peace.

**Mr. Manz** (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area — Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway — align themselves with this statement.

The countries of the European Union know from their own historical experience that societies and cultures

must not be seen as isolated entities, especially in an increasingly globalized world. For Europe, multi-ethnic and multicultural diversity has always been a reality. While creating an enormously rich heritage, it also generated conflicts, which often turned violent and resulted in disastrous wars. The countries that today form the EU have finally found their way to peace and stability through democracy, pluralism and human rights, which can only thrive in open and tolerant societies. We are therefore not only committed to preserving and further strengthening these fundamental elements of peace within the EU, but also to promoting international cooperation, democracy, the rule of law and human rights in our external relations.

In 1993, only a few years after the cold war ended, we first read about the "clash of civilizations", a new and rather pessimistic concept to describe and define the patterns of conflicts in a newly evolving, multipolar international system. At the end of this century, these conflicts seem to have grown in number and become crueller and more violent. This may explain the theory's inherent pessimism and also, I should add, its controversial reception.

The international community must not allow such theories to turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. The history of our own continent has taught us bitter lessons about the devastating effects of political theories and ideologies that build on human fears and causing destruction by exploiting the human struggle for equality, dignity and identity. The European Union therefore rejects the application of the clash theory to international relations and political practice.

In this context, we thank Iran for its initiative which has been presented to us today. We strongly support dialogue among and within countries, cultures and religions. This dialogue — the credibility of which can, at national levels, be guaranteed only in conditions provided by democratic governance — already exists in a variety of forms and at all levels. But it has to be strengthened to reach its goal: to overcome errors and deficiencies of the past and to peacefully settle conflicts, remove their causes and limit tensions.

Dialogue at the national level can best be ensured in a vibrant and participatory society based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, religion and association and the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and on representative and accountable government in which the aspirations of all sectors of society are fully reflected.

The EU sees the United Nations as an ideal place to advance the kind of dialogue that I just mentioned. The United Nations, as an Organization based on universal principles, has in fact done a great deal to establish a culture of dialogue in international relations in the aftermath of two catastrophic world wars. The United Nations Charter and those international legal norms of universal validity established as a result of a constant dialogue under the aegis of the United Nations provide the common ethical and legal grounds for the peaceful interaction we are aiming at. In this regard, may I just mention the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has been complemented by a number of important conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the relevant declarations of the General Assembly, as well as a multitude of international conventions. The universality of human rights was again reconfirmed at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

Dialogue within this framework is a prerequisite for peace and stability in today's world. In fact, it guarantees and protects creative diversity and pluralism. We must do our utmost to avoid the fragmentation of international law, international policies and cooperation under regional or cultural pretexts. We also recognize our own responsibility in this matter.

In conclusion, we support the positive approach of the initiative that has been presented to us today. We should also like to express our appreciation for the constructive approach taken during consultations by the authors of the draft resolution. As a result of this approach, all the member States of the European Union are in a position to co-sponsor this draft resolution.

**Mr. Rastam** (Malaysia): I would like to commend the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative to include the new item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations" in the agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. The proposal calling for a dialogue among civilizations is both timely and relevant. It brings into focus an issue of great importance which should rightfully receive more attention from the international community beyond the realm of academic interest.

My delegation firmly believes that dialogue should form the basis of interaction between peoples, nations and civilizations. We have, just in this century, witnessed many wars among nations and within them, large-scale

massacres, ethnic cleansing and genocide, intolerance, prejudice and disputes arising from political, economic, social or religious differences. Yet, also in this century, we have experienced the tremendous benefits of civilizational achievements arising from unprecedented human creativity, ingenuity and resourcefulness. As we stand at the threshold of the new millennium, we continue to face the enormous challenge of preventing the recurrence of the numerous tragic events as well as expanding further the limits of human knowledge and endeavour in all fields. The international community should therefore work towards promoting a norm of interaction and relations between nations based on dialogue, cooperation and mutual respect so as to maintain peace and security and encourage development and social progress throughout the world.

Dialogue should be promoted as the accepted mode of interaction and the means to resolve differences. Dialogue among civilizations is necessary to facilitate and enhance cross-cultural understanding. Too often we have seen how the misunderstanding of and distortions about a nation, culture or individual have led to suspicion, mistrust, fear and prejudice, culminating in intolerance, dispute and even war. It is thus important for the international community to promote, encourage and facilitate dialogue and understanding among various cultures and civilizations, thereby promoting peace, tolerance and cooperation.

Samuel Huntington, in his article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations", published a few years ago, hypothesized that the clash of civilizations would dominate global politics. If this hypothesis is anything to go by, it certainly carries a very ominous prediction. It has created a healthy debate among leaders, scholars and diplomats, giving rise to various interpretations and conclusions. The international community must endeavour to prevent such a clash at all costs. Thus, the call for a dialogue among civilizations is indeed timely.

My delegation believes that instead of looking at a possible clash of civilizations, we should strive to create a fruitful crossroad of civilizations, taking into consideration that throughout human history interaction among civilizations has brought about positive and mutually beneficial results. We have much to learn from each other, and we must take the best that each has to offer the other. The advent of multimedia technologies, the speed and ease of travel and telecommunications and the lightning-paced dissemination of information have provided us with a greater opportunity for interaction between peoples. While on the one hand promoting better understanding, such interactions have, on the other, heightened civilizational consciousness and the awareness of differences between civilizations. Only through dialogue will we be able to foster mutual understanding, mutual appreciation and mutual regard among civilizations, nations, cultures and peoples.

Civilizations can be differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition, world views and religion. Civilizations are not static. They change with the passage of time. The values and customs of a society at a particular period may differ from the values of the same society at a different period. My delegation believes that because of this dynamic state of civilizations, dialogue is necessary. It is timely that the year 2001 be designated as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

My delegation would also like to underline the need to observe certain principles which would be indispensable if we should seek to use dialogue as the means to maintain peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations and peoples, enhance international cooperation and resolve international issues and problems. I would like to reiterate here the principles as enumerated by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, in his speech at the Second Asia-Pacific Dialogue in Kuala Lumpur on 8 January 1996.

First is the principle of the greatest welfare of human society and its members. When all is said and done, this is the most profound concern of the State, the society and religion. The second principle is that of mutual respect, due respect for each other's values, cultures, aspirations and abilities. These are no less meaningful or important merely because they are not our own. Third is the principle of equality — equality of nations, be they large or small, powerful or weak. The fourth principle is a commitment to peace and peaceful means, which must underpin efforts to build international and regional security and manage differences among States. Fifth, given our interdependence, is the principle of cooperation and mutual help. Unilateralism has become a less productive option, even for the more powerful. The sixth principle is that of integrity — integrity to abide by the very values, norms and principles which we profess and declare and expect others to live by.

The international community must make a concerted effort to make dialogue the accepted norm of interaction. The threat of conflicts and the tendencies to invoke new

rivalries and confrontations will always be present. However, efforts must be made to ensure that none of us resorts to force as a means to resolve our differences. We should seek recourse through dialogue. In this regard, the United Nations has a central and important role to play in the promotion of dialogue among civilizations and cultures. It is uniquely placed to bridge the gap between peoples, nations and civilizations. After all, the concept of dialogue is congruent with the basic purposes and principles of the United Nations.

As a nation, Malaysia may not be in a position to speak of civilization's glories of past millennia. However, we have benefited from the rich cultural heritage of civilizations of East and West. Malaysia is a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious society. We have managed to maintain peace and harmony among the various ethnic groups which now represent the confluence of different civilizational and cultural heritages in modern Malaysian society. We have always believed in and have continuously propagated dialogue, understanding and tolerance as a means of promoting cooperation and acceptance within the Malaysian society.

In sponsoring and expressing my delegation's full support for the draft resolution as contained in document A/53/L.23/Rev.1, which was initiated by the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, my delegation hopes that it will have the unanimous support of the Assembly. We also hope that with the designation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the international community will collectively contribute to the enhancement of understanding through constructive dialogue.

**Mr. Sharma** (India): We believe that the Iranian initiative to inscribe on the agenda of this session of the General Assembly an item on "Dialogue among civilizations" is important. We were glad to speak in its support in the General Committee and to co-sponsor the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.23/Rev.1.

The United Nations was formed at the end of a war more shattering than any the world had previously endured, after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and after the death of millions. Across the street from this building, on the Ralph Bunche steps, are inscribed the stirring words from Isaiah:

> "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." *(The Holy Bible, Isaiah 2:4)*

The reality was less uplifting. Almost from its birth, the United Nations found itself drawn into a series of skirmishes, with battle-lines drawn on political issues between two competing blocs, not so much setting nation against nation, as value system against value system. It was a form of contention between two views of civilization.

On economic issues, there was a struggle between a capitalist model and the ideas of countries emerging from colonial rule, many of which were discovering for the first time the joys and responsibilities of nationhood and who had doubts cast upon their civilizational values and world views.

On social issues, a Western paradigm prevails. In international law, ancient systems of law and jurisprudence from Asia and Africa, for instance, have not been part of the evolution of thought.

Therefore, what we have had in the United Nations for far too long is — sporadically — a failure of understanding and appreciation, and — frequently — a tension between civilizations. Instead of Isaiah, we have had the words of Joel:

> "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near ... Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong." *(The Holy Bible, Joel 3:9 and 10)*

Clearly, we need tolerance, an acceptance that what is strange or foreign to us or to our way of thinking is not necessarily threatening or uncivilized.

The word "barbaric", we should remember, comes from "barbarikos", the old Greek word for "foreigner". We must get rid of the unconscious prejudice that tends to equate what is foreign with what is barbaric. True civilizations, no matter how wrapped in self-belief, never accept that. In Aeschylus's *"The Persians"*, they acknowledge their antagonists as tragic and therefore, by definition, heroic. Unfortunately, though, as enemies between whom dialogue was not possible, throughout the play Greeks and Persians exchange not a word. This is what must change.

We often hear that we live in and are moving ever deeper into an information age. We are told that the world has become a global village. But this is only partially true. On the one hand, the world has shrunk. It is a paradox that the explorers who set out to expand the borders of the known world ended up by reducing them. No corner of the globe is truly inaccessible, but, excluding the developed world, much of it is still *terra incognita*. In this village, not everyone knows each other, or about each other. The poor ones know about the rich, but the latter know very little about the dispossessed.

The World Bank's Development Report this year has as its theme "Knowledge for Development". Although it addresses only a small segment of the problem, its analysis of the information needs of a globalized world is restricted only to what developing countries need to do to make themselves known and attractive to investors in the industrialized world. There is no analysis and no acknowledgment of the need for the developed world to learn about the cultures, backgrounds or special characteristics of the countries they invest in.

The recent crisis in South-East Asia, caused in part by the sudden speculative withdrawal of foreign investments, was perhaps an indicator of how a lack of empathy between civilizations makes it easy to treat other people as objects. The human crisis, the danger of social collapse and the possible crumbling of value systems that could follow from economic meltdown were of no consequence to the managers of hedge funds on other continents, partly because the citizens of alien cultures meant very little to them.

However, in a globalized economy, if information is money or power, the acquaintance must be mutual. Civilizations must learn about each other and learn to value each other. It is worrying, therefore, that the uniquely powerful tool of this information age, the Internet, which could be a web to bind us together, is filled instead with tawdry commerce and, unfortunately, with racial and cultural stereotypes. There is very little as yet in it to promote understanding among peoples. By definition, the Internet cannot be controlled, but, if there is enough interest, it can be used to promote understanding rather than hatred. What can we in the United Nations do here?

The wars of the future, we are told, will be wars over scarce resources: water, perhaps other vital raw materials. From this flows the need to husband our resources, to make development sustainable while not constraining growth in developing societies. We do not subscribe to the theory that conflict is inevitable. What would be unproductive would be an attempt to prescribe universal solutions based on the experience and preferences of a segment of the world's population.

And yet, on environmental issues, which all of us agree are crucial to the well-being of our planet, there is often a refusal to learn from the experience and the wisdom of civilizations that have been rooted in nature and have seen man and other forms of life as symbiotic, not as objects of spoliation. There is a drift to lay down codes of environmental conduct that, in effect, make the developing countries atone for the excesses of others. At its most extreme, this vicarious expiation takes the form of theories of "deep ecology", in which, in a distortion of the beliefs of ancient Eastern civilizations, the needs of nature, arbitrarily defined, take precedence over the needs of man. That, too, is something which would not be accepted. This world is a work as much of civilization as of nature; a dialogue between man and his environment, as between the civilizations that mould both, is needed to make sure that the balance of nature is preserved.

Several years ago, a former Secretary-General reminded us that the days of absolute sovereignty were over. Liberalization means a loss of control for national Governments; so too does integration into a regional or the global economy. In some parts of the developed world, national borders have become blurred; Governments have started to cede to supranational organizations powers over fiscal, foreign and defence policies. In the developing world, Governments and their peoples find themselves at the mercy of global forces almost impossible to comprehend, leave alone master. The familiar attributes of national identity are fading. Quite often, what men and women have left to define themselves is a sense of the culture in which they have been brought up. If this becomes combatively defensive, culture can become the enemy of civilization; a *kulturkampf*, after all, led to the most virulently destructive nationalism the world has seen in recent times. This is why, in a globalized world, the need for a dialogue among civilizations is more critical than it has ever been.

In addition, almost every country has significant immigrant populations; hardly any nation now is racially or culturally homogeneous. There is or should be an automatic cross-fertilization of cultures — the materially dominant culture of the West, beamed into our living rooms through satellite television, leavened by the foreign

blood it has taken in. In some countries, this has happened, but that is rare. More often than not, immigrants are alienated from the mainstream, economically and socially disadvantaged. In reaction, they try to recapture and preserve the cultures of their motherland in an inhospitable setting; they face a choice between imperfect assimilation or an assertive display of cultural distinctiveness, which casts its dark shadow in the return of racism and xenophobia to countries from which they had withdrawn for a while.

If we are not again to tread that bloody path, which reaped for us a terrible harvest in the past, it is essential that our cultures not draw us into ghettoes and that, instead, civilizations engage each other in dialogue and seek to understand each other. The persistence of a sense of difference is the seed of alienation of understanding. It can be overcome through striving to value our collective heritage.

We have heard enough about the clash of civilizations. It is time to discourse on harmony of civilizations and there is no more propitious place to do that than this, our common house, the United Nations, which we have to strive harder to transform into the "Nations United".

We conceive of all civilizations as the common heritage of mankind. If we dismantle the walls, they are common property. The civilizations we have inherited manifest a potential of humankind and enrich us all, because they speak to us all. They widen our vision, refine our sensibilities and enhance our potential as humans. The ancient wisdom of India pronounces that the world is a family. To internationalize this spirit is the true globalization of the next millennium. We understand the meaning of "unity in diversity" very well in India.

As nuclear weapons represent the apocalyptic threat which respects no civilization, it is the foremost task of humankind to abolish them from the face of the Earth. This would be the highest civilizational legacy we can bequeath to the countless unborn generations. Half a century ago, one of the fabricators of the atomic bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, awestruck by the furies he had helped release, could recount the experience only in the words of a scripture of a different civilization. It was, he said, quoting from the *Bhagavad Gita*, "as if the light of a thousand suns had blazed forth at once and the creator had turned destroyer". We need a more gentle light to be shed on us, a light of the highest reason, of concord, of human accomplishment and richness of spirit — in a word, of faith in the future and our ability to fashion it.

Writing in 1958, long before globalization became a catchword or forecasts had been made about either the death of history or a clash of civilizations, Hannah Arendt wrote, as prophetically as any of the ancients, in her book *The Human Condition*:

> "The decline of the European nation-state system; the economic and geographic shrinkage of the Earth, so that prosperity and depression tend to become worldwide phenomena; the transformation of mankind, which until our own time was an abstract notion or a guiding principle for humanists only, into a really existing entity whose members at the most distant points of the globe need less time to meet than the members of a nation needed a generation ago — these mark the beginnings of the last stage in this development. Just as the family and its property were replaced by class membership and national territory, so mankind now begins to replace nationally bound societies, and the Earth replaces the limited State territory. But whatever the future may bring, the process of world alienation, started by expropriation and characterized by an ever increasing progressing wealth, can only assume even more radical proportions if it is permitted to follow its own inherent law."

It is our challenge to disprove that dire prophecy.

**Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to express its appreciation for the initiative of Mr. Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, a friendly country, of inscribing the item "Dialogue among civilizations" on the agenda and of proclaiming the year 2001 as the year for dialogue among civilizations. This initiative deserves the attention of all States in order to create a world free of destructive war and a world based on peace, understanding and equality among all States and peoples. The initiative, which stems from the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, draws its importance from the broad support it received at the Tehran Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and at the twelfth summit meeting of the Non-Aligned Countries in Durban, South Africa.

When we speak of dialogue among civilizations, the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic speaks from the vantage point of thousands of years of civilization to which it is committed. We speak of lands that saw the birth of mankind and the burgeoning of the first

civilizations. We speak of a territory which is sacred, on which the prophets walked. The values which these prophets shaped constitute the basis of life for today's man. From that land, the messages of the holy religions and science, art and literature, were conveyed. The Arab civilization, to which I belong, is characterized by tolerance, giving and inspiration. The achievements of the Arab civilization were a principal source of the scientific and cultural progress of the contemporary world. We also wish to emphasize that Arab civilization also benefitted from the achievements and contributions of other civilizations. When we speak of the role of Arab civilization, we also reaffirm its openness and its respect for the heritage and values of other civilizations.

The initiative regarding dialogue among civilizations is an open invitation to the international community to open up future prospects for all peoples and States so that they may effectively and equally contribute to greater progress for our societies. The invitation has been extended in order to prevent obsolete concepts, such as colonialism, neocolonialism, racial discrimination, poverty and xenophobia, from widening the chasm between our States and societies. Dialogue among civilizations is a call to the international community to put an end to foreign occupation, with its injustice and violations of people's values their right to life, freedom, sovereignty and progress. Dialogue among civilizations also means dependency on mutual understanding instead of on nuclear weapons and other modern weapons aimed at imposing superiority by force.

The Syrian Arab Republic, under the leadership of Hafez Al-Assad, basing itself on what our forefathers began for us civilizationally, extends a hand to other civilizations and cultures in Africa, Asia, Europe and in the two Americas, so that together we may build tomorrow's society based on justice, equality and cooperation.

The draft resolution in document A/52/L.23, submitted to us today and which reaffirms in its broad context the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the diversity of civilizational achievements and the importance of positive interaction among civilizations, reflects our aspirations and the aspirations of the founders of the Organization. Our delegation hopes that the draft will be adopted by consensus.

**Mr. Fruchtbaum** (Solomon Islands): The concept of a dialogue among civilizations is important and complex. In fact its complexity is a measure of its importance. Much has been published in recent years about the conflict between civilizations. Some have argued that the conflict is an inevitable consequence of profound differences between civilizations. The Solomon Islands delegation rejects the claim of inevitability and welcomes efforts to encourage continuous dialogues between peoples. We support draft resolution A/53/L.23, which designates the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and we thank the delegation of Iran for moving this proposal forward for our consideration.

The concept of a dialogue among civilizations, however, has its difficulties. For example, how are civilizations to be defined for the Year of Dialogue? We have no difficulty in recognizing the great civilizations in our time and in the history of humankind, but what recognition is to be given to those cultures and civilizations that comprise larger ones? What in fact is the relationship between culture and civilization? These are questions that anthropologists and historians have long studied.

Clearly, much thought must be given to how the proposed United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will be structured. Who, for example, will be called to participate in the dialogue? Will the talking be done only by certain elites, to the exclusion of a wider representation of society? How is serious dialogue, rather than a series of unanswered monologues, to be fostered? How will sensitive questions, such as the role of religion or human rights in civilization, be addressed? These are the sorts of questions that we will have to consider. They cannot be left for resolution to the Secretariat or a specialized agency. If the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is to be successful, perhaps even the beginning of a decade or more of dialogue that contributes to international understanding and cooperation, the planning must begin here and be open to us all.

**The Acting President:** In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), of 10 October 1975, I now call on the observer for the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

**Mr. Lamani** (Organization of the Islamic Conference) (*interpretation from Arabic*): History bears witness to the fact that the Islamic civilization is one of the world's eternal and brilliant civilizations. The reason for its brilliance is the contribution of the Islamic nation to all of humanity in the spiritual, philosophical, scientific, literary, technical and other fields. The heritage of that nation has broad horizons, because is it

a human one that has extended over a long period of time. If the Islamic civilization was established on the basis of creed and belief, it was also established on the basis of creative contributions in the fields of thought, literature and science. Thanks to those pillars, the Islamic civilization has guaranteed its own flowering, has laid down foundations of life and has spread its reign of civility, dignity and respect.

Islamic civilization is the product of a society that has fostered interaction between the culture of its age, Greek sciences, and Persian wisdom. Furthermore, it has interacted with other peoples from Africa, Asia and Europe. Other civilizations have drawn upon Islamic civilization, taking turns in passing on the torch, thereby confirming the solidarity of humankind and the fact that humanity is basically across one time and place.

The inter-civilizational interaction across the span of history has made stability either attainable or unachievable. Although history has never been consistently positive, in most cases it has been alive and dynamic. We believe that throughout its long history, humanity has never faced a danger that has reached the proportions of the one we are witnessing today, one which threatens our very existence. It is true that all ages and all regions of the world have experienced wars. In fact, entire peoples may have been subjected to genocide, and continents and regions may have faced destruction because of civil, colonial and religious wars. But no conflict has ever before threatened the very survival of humanity, and no danger has ever before held over humanity the spectre of its total elimination. Yet, this is our situation today with the existence of arsenals of nuclear and other weapons that are capable of liquidating all vestiges of life on earth.

On the other hand, the uncontrollable diffusion of means of communication has not contributed to the achievement of greater understanding between peoples or of more solid bases for coexistence under a reign of peace. Thus it is our hope that at the threshold of the new millennium, humanity will pause to reflect upon its commitment to the establishment of a better tomorrow and to the achievement of a brighter future.

Therefore, we in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) consider that the initiative launched during the OIC Summit by President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, proposing that 2001 be designated the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, deserves every respect, attention and pursuit. The Secretary-General of the OIC, Mr. Azeddine Laraki, has established a working group on the organization of the dialogue among contemporary civilizations. That group met in Jeddah from 23 to 25 June 1998 to prepare for an Islamic seminar on the subject. It is expected that the seminar will take place next year, in line with the present efforts to achieve success in the dialogue among all human civilizations.

In conclusion, we would like this dialogue to be a means for laying down solid foundations for a system based on peaceful coexistence and for guaranteeing a future of harmonious diversity and complementarity between our cultures, in a framework of ensuring dignity and justice for all.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I shall now call on the representative of Japan, who wishes to speak in explanation of position before action is taken on the draft resolution.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Takasu** (Japan): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express support for draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1. It is the view of Japan that all States Members of the United Nations share the spirit of this draft resolution: that the international community must not resort to hostility and conflict in the face of an impasse, but rather should seek a solution through peaceful dialogue and mutual understanding. In the same spirit, Japan, as a nation of culture and civilization, is actively promoting cultural and intellectual exchange and dialogue in various fields. It is our sincere hope that the nurturing of friendly relations among States and the encouragement of international cooperation through a dialogue among civilizations will one day free the world from devastating conflicts and unnecessary bloodshed.

The significance of this draft resolution has been further increased by the incorporation of additional suggestions. It is important for us to recall that tolerance and respect for diversity as stressed by the draft resolution are at the same time conducive to universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Through dialogue and mutual understanding, the international community can reconfirm and strengthen its common values and goals, thereby enhancing the dignity of human beings.

Finally, Japan would like to express its gratitude to the Islamic Republic of Iran for taking the initiative in introducing this very important issue to the General Assembly and for its considerable effort to produce this consensus draft.

**The Acting President**: Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution I should like to announce that the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1: Belarus, Benin, Finland, France, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine and the United Arab Emirates.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1?

*Draft resolution A/53/L.23/Rev.1 was adopted* (resolution 53/22).

**The Acting President:** Before giving the floor to the representative of New Zealand in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Powles** (New Zealand) New Zealand joins others in supporting this interesting initiative. We regard the whole question of a dialogue among civilizations as a huge and enormously important issue. The delegation of Iran and other sponsors of the resolution are to be commended for providing this moment for us to pause and reflect on the larger issues determining international relations.

We have not joined in sponsoring the resolution, however, because as a small Member of the Organization, we have inevitably not been closely involved in the discussions on the original draft resolution which have taken place.

We believe this initiative has the potential to have significant implications for the vexed question of North-South relations, tensions over which bedevil so much of what this Organization strives to do. New Zealand will therefore enthusiastically support any initiatives, including this one, involving a dialogue among civilizations which are likely to be effective in reducing North-South tensions and distrust.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position after adoption.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 168?

*It was so decided.*

**Programme of work**

**The Acting President:** I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/53/3/Add.3, which covers the programme of work for the period from 10 November through 10 December 1998. I note that the lists of speakers for all items mentioned in document A/INF/53/3/Add.3 are now open.

I should like to inform representatives of changes to the programme of work as it is set out in document A/INF/53/3/Add.2. Consideration of agenda item 59, "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters", has been moved from Tuesday, 10 November, to the afternoon of Thursday, 19 November.

Agenda item 44, on the situation in Central America, will be considered in the morning of Wednesday, 18 November, as the second item, instead of on Thursday, 19 November.

I should also like to point out the following: on Tuesday, 10 November, under agenda item 12, entitled, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", the General Assembly will consider a draft resolution on the international year of mountains, which is to be issued this Friday as document A/53/L.24; furthermore, on Wednesday, 18 November, in the afternoon, under agenda item 30, entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", it is expected that the General Assembly will consider the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements circulated in document A/53/463; on Wednesday, 25 November, in the morning, the General Assembly will consider agenda item 58, entitled, "Strengthening of the United Nations system", together with agenda item 60, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly". Members will recall that those two items were also considered together at the fifty-second session. It is expected that the report of the Secretary-General on arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United

Nations system, issued as document A/53/170, will be considered at that meeting.

Furthermore, members are aware that there are still a few agenda items for which no date has yet been indicated. The dates for the consideration of those items will be announced in due course and sufficiently in advance. The Assembly will also be kept informed of any additions or changes to the programme of work.

Finally, representatives are reminded that additional time is needed for those draft resolutions involving changes in the work programme or additional expenditures, since they will require the preparation of a statement of programme budget implications by the Secretary-General and, furthermore, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee will need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of any draft resolutions before draft resolutions can be acted on by the Assembly.

In this connection, representatives submitting draft resolutions are kindly requested to do so sufficiently in advance of the dates fixed for consideration of items in order to give members adequate time to examine them.

*The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.*

United Nations A/53/PV.54

# General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

*Official Records*

54th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 10 November 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Mungra (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Tribute to the memory of Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, Head of State of the Comoros**

**The Acting President:** This morning, before we take up the items on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late head of State of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, who passed away on 5 November 1998.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of the Comoros to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of the Comoros and to the bereaved family of Mr. Abdoulkarim.

I invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of Mr. Abdoulkarim.

*The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.*

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of Sudan, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

**Mr. Erwa** (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*):

"Among the Believers are men
Who have been true to
Their covenant with Allah:
Of them some have died
And some (still) wait:
But they have never changed
(Their determination) in the least." (*The Holy Koran, XXXIII:23*)

This is a sad time to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of African States Members of the United Nations. On behalf of the entire African continent and indeed the entire world, we express our sadness at the death of the late President of the fraternal Comoros, Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim.

On behalf of the African Group, I convey our sincere condolences to the delegation of the Comoros and, through that delegation, to the Government and the people of that fraternal country and to the family of the late President, who was a major African figure. We ask God to take President Abdoulkarim to his bosom, and to inspire his family and people with fortitude and solace.

The deeds of President Abdoulkarim were many and valuable. He ranked among the best of statesmen; he was an outstanding leader of the Comoros. History will testify to his many achievements. Since he took power at a difficult time in the history of the Comoros, of which we are all aware, President Abdoulkarim saw his mission as

98-86356 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

serving his people as leader and guiding them to success, and as serving the goal of his country's unity and solidarity, continuing his record, which was replete with struggle. For that struggle he suffered and was imprisoned. He was elected to lead his country, winning the votes of the majority of voters among his people, he gained respect from his people and recognition from international and regional organizations thanks to his self-sacrificing commitment to the development of a society based on virtue, morality, respect for human rights, and respect for the will of his people.

With the death of this wise leader, the fraternal Comoros has lost a great and wise man and a capable leader. This is a loss not solely for the Comoros, but for all of Africa, which aspires to having responsible leaders like Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim. We ask God to take him and to forgive him, along with all martyrs.

**The Acting President:** I call next on the representative of Oman, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asian States.

**Mr. Al-Hinai** (Oman): On behalf of the Group of Asian States I have the distinct honour to join other members of the General Assembly in paying a special tribute to the memory of the late President of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim. Mr. Abdoulkarim had a distinguished political career, having held important positions in successive Administrations since the Comoros achieved its independence in 1975. He played a prominent role in international affairs, with active participation, along with his fellow heads of State, in meetings of the Organization of African Unity, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the League of Arab States. We recognize that the passing away of Mr. Abdoulkarim is an immeasurable loss to the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros and the cause of tremendous grief among its people.

On behalf of the Group of Asian States, I would like to request the Permanent Representative of the Comoros to convey the condolences of the Group to the Government and the people of the Comoros, and especially to the family of President Abdoulkarim. We pray that God will grant them the patience to bear this great loss. May the soul of President Abdoulkarim rest in eternal peace.

**The Acting President:** I call on the representative of Romania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

**Mr. Gorita** (Romania): It is with profound regret that the countries of the Eastern European Group have learned of the untimely passing away of the President of the Islamic Federal Republic of Comoros, Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim. As an outstanding participant in the political life of his country for many years and since his election as head of State in March 1996, President Abdoulkarim has vigorously worked for the political stability and economic progress of the country and the well-being of the people of the Comoros.

At this moment of deep sorrow, on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I wish to present to the President *ad interim* of the Comoros, to the Government and people of the Comoros and, foremost, to the bereaved family our heartfelt condolences. We are confident that this sad event will further mobilize the Comorian people in their efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the country's political and economic problems.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador, who will make a statement on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

**Mr. Izquierdo** (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the delegation of Ecuador wishes to express our most heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros at the regrettable passing away on 5 November 1998 of their head of State, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States would like to associate itself in solidarity with this special and heartfelt tribute to the memory of Mr. Abdoulkarim, who was a notable statesman and a political leader of great importance to his country and to the international community. His presence in the history of his country will always be remembered.

The delegation of Ecuador would be grateful to the delegation of Comoros if it would convey this message of friendship from the member countries of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to the family of the deceased, the authorities and the people of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, who will make a statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

**Mr. Smith** (Australia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

It is my sad duty to extend sincere condolences on behalf of the Group to the people and Government of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros on the untimely death of their head of State, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim.

President Abdoulkarim was an important figure in the political life of Comoros for decades, with a career culminating in his election as President in March 1996. History will attest to his achievements as President and to the contribution he made to the advancement of his people.

Our thoughts are with the people and Government of Comoros at this difficult time.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Yemen, who will make a statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

**Mr. Al-Ashtal** (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I wish to express our most sincere condolences to the Government and people of the Comoros islands on the untimely death of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim, who assumed the presidency of his country on 25 March 1996 after having played a great role in building the Comoros. This is a great loss for the people of the Comoros and for the entire continent of Africa.

We in the Group of Arab States would like to express our heartfelt condolences, and we pray to God that He will bring peace to the family of the deceased. We ask that the Permanent Representative of Comoros convey our condolences to the people of Comoros.

May God forgive him and give him peace.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will make a statement on behalf of the host country.

**Ms. Montoya** (United States of America): The Government of the United States would like to express its condolences to the family of President Abdoulkarim and to the people of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros.

We recall that at a time of our own national grief — the tragic crash of a hijacked Ethiopian Airlines plane in the Indian Ocean — President Abdoulkarim and the people of the Comoros aided American victims of the crash, their families and the United States Government. We also recall the assistance and support of the President in the aftermath of a second national tragedy, the terrorist attacks on our embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam.

At this critical juncture for the young democracy in the Comoros, we call on the Government and the people to pull together and work as one for the good of the nation. That is the best and most appropriate way to honour the memory of President Abdoulkarim — through the triumph of constitutional forces in the Comoros in ensuring the safe and legal succession of a new head of State.

**The Acting President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros, Mr. Mohamed Aboud Mahmoud.

**Mr. Mahmoud** (Comoros) (*interpretation from French*): It is with great emotion that the delegation of the Comoros has listened to the tributes you have just paid to our late President of the Republic, His Excellency Hajj Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim. On behalf of my Government and the people of the Comoros, we would like to extend our most sincere thanks to all the Member States and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, who has also paid a fervent tribute to our President.

I would first like to assure you that this interim period is proceeding calmly and peacefully. In accordance with article 10 of the Comorian Constitution, the High Council of the Republic, having been charged by the Government, took note of the passing away of the President of the Republic and conveyed interim power of the presidency to Mr. Tadjidine Ben Saïd Massonde, President of the High Council of the Republic, who also sits on the Constitutional Council.

I would like to recall some good memories of my President by describing some of his accomplishments. Born in M'Beni, Comoros, in 1936, Mr. Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim was the fourth President of the Comoros, and it can be said that he was representative of the first Comorian political generation. He was distinguished by his dynamism and sense of responsibility and was elected a deputy of the Territorial Assembly of the Comoros in 1967 to represent his region.

He also held several ministerial portfolios before the Comoros attained independence. A tireless champion of

independence, he was not surprised when that goal was achieved on 6 July 1975. However, he also encountered political setbacks that led to his imprisonment and exile. In 1978 he was elected Deputy to the Federal Assembly as well as its President. Then, in 1985, he was for the first time forced into exile because of his political convictions. After a five-year exile in France, he returned to the Comoros in 1990, running in the presidential elections held following the assassination of the President of the Republic, Mr. Ahmed Abdallah Abderemane, by a group of mercenaries. He lost to Mr. Saïd Mohamed Djohar. Following the 1995 *coup d'état*, he appeared to be the clear choice to restore the State's authority and initiate national recovery. He ran for election in 1996 and was elected to replace Mr. Djohar.

A man of dialogue, he appealed to all political groups to restore the archipelago's legitimacy. In the framework of the Organization of African Unity, the French-speaking world and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, President Taki was one step ahead of his counterparts in championing the idea of strengthened South-South cooperation. Within the framework of the French-speaking world, he recalled the archipelago's profound dedication to the common cultural heritage shared by millions of men and women on various continents.

He supported the idea of the integration of a broad regional market among the countries of the Committee on the Indian Ocean. Likewise, in the framework of the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, he recalled that the principle of solidarity must govern relations among its members. Finally, he endeavoured to strengthen bilateral relations through agreements that opened up the way for common development and educational support projects.

In keeping with the legitimate aspirations of President Taki, I should like from this rostrum solemnly to appeal to the international community to help my country find a solution to the separatist crisis plaguing it. The unity and territorial integrity of the Comoros are being threatened. The very foundation of our State is in jeopardy, as are peace and stability in Africa and the Indian Ocean. This sets a dangerous precedent for the rest of the world. Resolving the Anjouan crisis will require international solidarity and a commitment by the Arab and African countries. Now more than ever measures should be taken not only to resolve the current crisis but also to ensure peace and stability, which are a guarantee of lasting and harmonious economic and social development for the region and for the Comoros.

The Comoros is in mourning, and the Comorian people have been orphaned. President Taki wanted to reconcile and pacify an entire people and open the Comoros to the outside world and to globalization. The international community has lost one of its children — one who was deeply dedicated to the cause of peace, security and stability in the south-west Indian Ocean region.

**Agenda item 3**

**Credentials of representatives to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly**

**(b) Report of the Credentials Committee (A/53/556)**

**The Acting President:** The draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 11 of its report reads as follows:

> "*The General Assembly*,
>
> "*Having considered* the report of the Credentials Committee and the recommendation contained therein,
>
> "*Approves* the report of the Credentials Committee."

**Mr. Al-Kidwa** (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I only wish to make the following observation outside the framework of the procedures of the General Assembly on the report of the Credentials Committee.

It is well known to all members that the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries recognized that the participation of Israel in the work of the General Assembly should be in accordance with international law. Consequently, the credentials of Israel should not cover the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem/Al-Quds.

It is also well known that the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement instructed the Chairman of that Bureau to send a letter to the Chairman of the Credentials Committee to let him and the Committee members know what the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement had decided. We have been given to understand that this letter was conveyed to the Committee after it had convened its first meeting. Therefore, we hope that — regardless of the fact that the

Committee and the General Assembly will have already acted on the issue in question — the next report of the Credentials Committee will reflect that as an objective fact.

**The Acting President:** We shall now proceed to consider the draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 11 of its report.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

**Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish at the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Egypt, to thank the Chairman and the members of the Credentials Committee for the report contained in document A/53/556.

The delegation of Egypt recognizes that the draft resolution before us is always adopted by consensus. Egypt will join the consensus on the draft this year, and wishes to register that the credentials of the delegation of Israel apply only to Israel in its borders of 4 June 1967 and not to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Al-Quds/Jerusalem. Our acceptance of the consensus adoption of the report does not constitute any recognition of Al-Quds/Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

This is in keeping with the provisions of international law and international legitimacy. Our position was expressed at the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Durban last September, which underlined the following:

> "The Israeli representation in the work of the United Nations General Assembly should be in consonance with international law. Consequently, we have to confirm that the Israeli credentials do not cover the territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds/Jerusalem."

This position is also contained in a letter of 21 October addressed by the Permanent Representative of South Africa, as representing the head of the Movement, to the Chairman of the Credentials Committee. That letter was not mentioned in the report before the Assembly today.

**Mr. Zamaninia** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I am taking the floor to express the reservation of my delegation regarding the part of the report of the Credentials Committee contained in document A/53/556 that relates to the credentials of Israel. My delegation notes that draft resolutions on this subject are routinely adopted without a vote. Hence, in line with the position of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran on this issue, my delegation wishes to dissociate itself from the part of the report that refers to the approval of the credentials of Israel.

**The Acting President:** We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting, and we shall now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 11 of its report (A/53/556).

The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

*The draft resolution was adopted* (resolution 53/23).

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 3.

**Agenda item 12**

**Report of the Economic and Social Council**

**Draft resolution (A/53/L.24)**

**The Acting President:** I give the floor to the representative of Kyrgyzstan to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.24.

**Ms. Eshmambetova** (Kyrgyzstan): On behalf of 130 sponsors, I am very pleased to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.24, entitled "International Year of Mountains".

The draft resolution proclaims the year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. This date has been agreed upon by most delegations. Symbolically, the International Year of Mountains will coincide with Rio+10, the 10-year overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. It will also be preceded in the year 2000 by the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which will focus on land resources, including mountain resources.

The draft resolution further invites the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, as task manager for chapter 13 of Agenda 21, to serve as the lead agency for the year, and it calls upon Governments, national and international non-governmental organizations and the private sector to make voluntary contributions and give other forms of support to the International Year of Mountains.

It also encourages all Governments, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the International Year of Mountains to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development.

Mountains or highlands make up more than a quarter of the earth's land surface and are home to approximately 10 per cent of the world's population. More than half of the world's population depends on mountain resources for water, biodiversity, recreation, agriculture, forestry and mining, among other things. Some of these resources are of more than national or regional importance; they have a truly global significance for the future of our planet.

Mountains are a great source of fresh water. All of the world's largest rivers originate in the mountains. Because they store immense amounts of fresh water as ice and snow, and in lakes and reservoirs, mountains play a global role in supplying water for agriculture, industry and urban centres in adjacent lowlands. Since 35 per cent of the world's population is likely to experience water scarcity by the year 2025, water management and economic cooperation between riparian States will become extremely important in the twenty-first century.

Mountains are core areas of global biodiversity. They are sanctuaries for a great wealth of endemic species, specialized ecosystems and remarkable landscapes. Tropical and subtropical mountains, in particular, include major centres of global biodiversity. Many mountain regions with the greatest biological and landscape diversity are protected areas. In fact, of the 785 million hectares of protected areas in the world, one third are in the mountains, in 65 different countries. Genetic material in plants, animals and micro-organisms holds potential for purposes of agriculture, the health and welfare of human beings and environmental protection. Thus, mountain areas play the most important role in the sustainable use and long-term preservation of biodiversity on our planet.

More than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and urbanization will continue in the next century. The rapid increase in global urbanization means greater demand for leisure and recreational areas. Mountains have the most attractive potential in this regard, as they offer a rich variety of vast, natural landscapes. Mountains play an important role in tourism, the world's largest industry, which employs more than 200 million people, one tenth of the world's workforce. To strike a balance between economic interests and ecological aspects is in the interest of both the local and the global population.

Sustainable mountain development and resource use is only possible by, and for, the mountain communities. Local knowledge and experience are necessary to sustain ecosystems, livelihoods and production. However, they must be integrated carefully with new techniques and research findings. Governments must be ready to make proportionately greater investments to train and educate people in mountain regions and to compensate the stewards of mountain resources. Governments have a great responsibility for these so-called peripheral regions and their vital resources. The decentralization of power from capital cities to mountain regions, towns and villages would be one of the best ways to empower mountain inhabitants, reduce costs, increase efficiency and create the necessary interest in sustainable development and management of mountain resources.

Mountains are dynamic landscapes which are changing on a global scale, probably much more rapidly than any other major environmental system. Enormous obstacles facing sustainable mountain development in the twenty-first century will not be overcome unless the problems are recognized and addressed by local communities, national policy makers and international organizations.

Chapter 13 of Agenda 21, adopted in Rio in 1992, recognized the vital and interrelated importance of this major ecosystem to the survival of the global ecosystem. It further emphasized the need to encourage the regional, national and international networking of people's initiatives and the activities of international, regional and local non-governmental organizations working on mountain development. Such an initiative originated at an international conference held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in 1996 on "Mountain research: challenges and directions for the twenty-first century". The participants in that conference adopted a resolution which called upon the international community to proclaim an international year of mountains with the idea of highlighting the importance and advancing the cause of sustainable mountain development. The proposal was strongly supported by the

President of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. Askar Akayev, in his letter to the Secretary-General.

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1997/45, entitled "Proclamation of an international year of mountains", adopted at its substantive session in Geneva, welcomed and supported ongoing efforts to protect fragile mountain ecosystems and to promote sustainable mountain development. It further requested the Secretary-General to seek the views of Governments and relevant international, regional and non-governmental organizations on the desirability of proclaiming an international year of mountains.

The report of the Secretary-General, prepared on the basis of the replies from Governments, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and submitted at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council last summer in New York, showed that although there is a greater recognition of the importance of mountains for the global economy, society and the environment, great efforts are still needed at all levels to protect, conserve and sustainably manage these resources.

At that session the Economic and Social Council session adopted a resolution recommending that the General Assembly proclaim an international year of mountains, as this would provide an impetus for achieving the objectives of Chapter 13 on sustainable mountain development. We very much hope that the General Assembly will follow this recommendation by the Economic and Social Council and adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

**Mr. Ghimire** (Nepal): In line with Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/45 of 22 July 1997, entitled "Proclamation of an international year of mountains", my delegation is pleased to express its full support both in terms of the desirability of this proclamation and, most importantly, in terms of taking appropriate action to ensure the sustainability of mountain countries.

As Nepal has the unique distinction of being home to most of the world's tallest mountains, we believe that the proclamation of an International Year of Mountains not only recognizes the need for preserving the global life support system so indispensable to the survival of the global ecosystem, but also provides a sound basis for further substantive work on mountain development, thus having a truly global significance for the future of mankind.

It would be in order to mention that the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development stands to contribute to attaining environmental sustainability and poverty eradication in the Himalaya-Hindu Kush region.

In recent years, the Centre has intensified its efforts to promote the sustainability of mountain farming systems and sustainable management of mountain natural resources, to build national capacities for preparing and implementing strategies for sustainable mountain development and to establish a strong information base — a network — on the sustainable development of the Himalaya-Hindu Kush region, among other things.

In the view of the Nepalese delegation, the proclamation of the International Year of Mountains is a modest first step towards environmental sustainability and poverty eradication, areas which need to be addressed more effectively throughout the world. It is also our view that such a solemn gesture would contribute to finding ways and means to ensure the sustainable development of mountain countries.

It is in this spirit that we emphasize the imperative need to use our resources and opportunities, combined with international collaborative efforts and an interdisciplinary scientific approach, to come up with an effective and viable plan aimed in this direction.

**Mr. Zipper** (France) (*interpretation from French*): The proclamation of the Year 2002 as the International Year of Mountains is a very welcome initiative, for which I want to express warm thanks to Kyrgyzstan, which has enthusiastically and steadfastly inspired the draft resolution before us.

The draft resolution will enable us to strengthen international cooperation in the area of mountains, especially at the regional and subregional levels, to raise public awareness through a wide variety of activities and to intensify exchanges of information and of experiences in order, *inter alia*, to identify and disseminate information about good practice in this respect.

France is particularly sensitive to the need to preserve and develop mountain regions, but these efforts can be effective only if they take place within an international framework. Hence, my country, for example, concluded the International Convention for the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention) with its neighbours.

For all of these reasons, my country has decided, as it did at the last session of the Economic and Social Council, to co-sponsor this draft resolution, and we will strive to make the International Year of Mountains a memorable event.

**The Acting President:** The General Assembly will now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.24, entitled "International Year of Mountains".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

*Draft resolution A/53/L.24 was adopted* (resolution 53/24).

**The Acting President:** We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 12.

**Agenda item 31**

**Culture of peace**

**Note by the Secretary-General, transmitting the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (A/53/370 and Add.1 and 2)**

**Draft resolution (A/53/L.25)**

**The Acting President:** I should like to inform members that, in a letter dated 14 October 1998 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Andorra to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and Other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of the Holy See on agenda item 31, "Culture of peace".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the observer of the Holy See on this agenda item?

*It was so decided.*

**The Acting President:** I now call on the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.25.

**Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh): It is a particular pleasure for my delegation to initiate the discussion on agenda item 31, entitled "Culture of peace". We have before us the Secretary-General's report in document A/53/370, containing the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace.

Last year, Bangladesh was honoured to present to the General Assembly in plenary meeting, on behalf of 50 countries, the draft of resolution 52/13 on a culture of peace, which was adopted by consensus. The present consolidated report has been prepared in accordance with that resolution and contains recommendations which we believe are valuable and action-oriented and will contribute to the global spread of a culture of peace.

As the introduction of the report says, in a rapidly changing world characterized by the growing importance of ethical issues, a culture of peace provides future generations with values that can help them to shape their destiny and actively participate in constructing a more just, humane, free and prosperous society and a more peaceful world.

At this point of human history, why is it so important to have a culture of peace? The answer appears to be an obvious one if we look at the nature of the conflict and social strife that are experienced all across the world. We see that inter-State wars and occupation have been on the decline since the end of the cold war. This should have contributed to a lessening of violence, but the reverse appears to be the case. As we approach the next millennium, we are alarmed at the endemic violence that stems from intra-State conflicts, social strife, deprivation, the suppression of human rights, control over scarce resources, ethnicity, racism and xenophobia.

The defence against violence will have to be constructed not in the actions of States alone, but above all in the minds of women and men, children and adults alike. That defence will be the inculcation of the culture of peace and non-violence in every human being. The main elements of the culture of peace will include respect for life and all human rights; rejection of violence; inculcation of the principles of freedom, justice and democracy; tolerance and solidarity among individuals and peoples; addressing the root causes of conflicts;

problem-solving through dialogue and negotiation; freedom of expression and opinion and the right to information; and full and effective participation in development processes.

When we consider these elements, we realize immediately that the culture of peace is no new invention. It is a set of values and principles that are respected and held in high esteem in all societies, cultures and religions. These are values accepted universally and which form the bedrock of the culture of peace.

The culture of peace aims at empowering people. It contributes to overcoming authoritarian structures and exploitation through democratic participation. It works against poverty and inequalities and promotes development. It celebrates diversity, advances understanding and tolerance, and reduces inequality between man and woman.

Indeed, the development of the concept of the culture of peace has both theoretical and practical values. It provides a conceptual framework that emphasizes the importance of addressing the deep cultural roots of war and violence and it constitutes the basis of a coherent strategy for the culture of peace and non-violence. Bangladesh believes that the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace represent a significant step in the building of a global United Nations strategy of articulated, mutually reinforcing actions for the building of the culture of peace and for the prevention of violence. We welcome the texts and wholeheartedly support them.

The General Assembly, in proclaiming the millennium year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace, has recognized the value of the culture of peace. The General Assembly will also be acting later today on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.25 on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). Bangladesh, along with a large number of co-sponsoring countries, had the honour of initiating the proposal for the Decade in the Economic and Social Council last July. We trust that the draft resolution will be adopted by wholehearted consensus by the world body, opening the vista for the culture of peace and non-violence for present and future generations.

Bangladesh is pleased to find in the consolidated report information on a wide range of activities relating to a culture of peace undertaken by the United Nations system, in particular by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in various parts of the world. The involvement of civil society in these activities is very crucial. The challenge of promoting a culture of peace is so broad and far-reaching that it can be met only if it becomes a priority for the entire United Nations system. What better action can the United Nations take to realize the objectives of its Charter than the promotion of the culture of peace worldwide?

We are therefore very encouraged by the attention given by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) last month to the culture of peace initiative. In document A/53/370/Add.2 it is mentioned that the executive heads of the United Nations agencies agreed that the concept of the culture of peace was at the heart of the United Nations system. We also welcome the decision of the ACC to launch the International Year for the Culture of Peace at all United Nations system headquarters and field offices on the International Day of Peace in 1999. We commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his forward-looking support for the culture of peace initiative. Bangladesh, along with many other countries, also pays tribute to the visionary leadership of UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor in this regard and encourage his greater involvement in the activities relating to the culture of peace.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the resolution adopted at the meeting of the UNESCO Executive Board on Friday, 6 November 1998, at Tashkent on a culture of peace. The consolidated report has identified the varied nature of activities undertaken by countries, civil society and international and regional organizations to promote a culture of peace. A remarkable example of such activities is the memorial of the island of Gorée in Senegal, which is a manifestation of tolerance and non-violence for Africa and its diaspora. The peace prize named after President Félix Houphouët-Boigny is also a noteworthy way of honouring individuals dedicated to the culture of peace.

We believe that the draft declaration and programme of action are well drafted and contain the specific actions that will facilitate the promotion of a culture of peace. They provide a conceptual framework which can increase the effectiveness of the United Nations system in an integrated manner in its work for the promotion of a culture of peace and link these activities to other priority areas of the United Nations, including those pertaining to international peace and security, democracy, development and human rights. In this context, Bangladesh believes that a culture of peace can be chosen very appropriately

as the overarching theme for the proposed Millennium Assembly in the year 2000.

We call for the adoption of the draft declaration and programme of action as soon as possible during this session of the General Assembly. Bangladesh will be greatly honoured to present an appropriate draft resolution for the consensus adoption of the texts. We will also be happy to coordinate consultations in this regard, as we did last year.

**Mrs. Ataeva** (Turkmenistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): At the outset, allow me to express our gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for bringing to this forum the issue that may define our future, that of a culture of peace.

Our delegation would like to commend the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the comprehensive and substantive consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. Turkmenistan fully supports the initiatives contained in the report calling upon all Member States to join in commemorating the year 2000, the birth of the new millennium, as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

The Government of Turkmenistan is co-sponsoring the draft resolution on the culture of peace at this session, as it did last year. Last summer Turkmenistan co-sponsored the Economic and Social Council resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). We hope that delegations will also support the adoption of the present draft resolution by consensus at the current session of the General Assembly.

A need for lasting peace prompted the creation of the United Nations more than 53 years ago. From the day of its founding until now peace has remained the first and most important commandment embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. A culture of peace is a comprehensive complex of values based on the right to peace, which is vital and inseparable from any other basic human rights, such as the rights to life, security, freedom and development, women's rights and children's rights. We believe that peace can be built only by sharing responsibility and engaging in dialogue in an effort to ban violence, hatred and the use of military power. Peace can be guaranteed if it is based on the values and principles of freedom, justice, democracy, respect for all human rights, tolerance and the recognition of diversity.

The notion of learning to live together is not a new one, and the threads and routes that linked cultures and civilizations can be found throughout human history. In our part of the world one of the longest bridges of multicultural communication was the Silk Road, which linked almost every civilization of Asia to Europe. The caravans carried not only the material treasures of those cultures, but also their splendid jewels of human thought, including books of wisdom and masterpieces of our cultural heritage. We are very pleased that UNESCO included the name of the great Turkmen thinker and poet Magtymguly in the list of those cultural treasures.

We commend UNESCO's work in providing assistance to several projects of the Integral Study of the Silk Road, in organizing international expeditions and colloquiums, launching international research programmes and institutes, in promoting cultural tourism and in producing studies, films, and publications, including a history book on the civilizations of Central Asia. Today, our countries are promoting the renaissance of those forgotten trails of the Silk Road by strengthening economic and cultural cooperation.

Turkmenistan believes that strong economic cooperation can help achieve a better peace. The only way to realize all the benefits of peace is by respecting international obligations and mutually agreed upon legal instruments and to recognize that the maintenance of peace is interdependent with other factors. In this regard, Turkmenistan has expressed the need to ensure the security and unimpeded transit of natural resources through pipelines. These pipelines, like another Silk Road, have become the main arteries of the region and are vital for its development.

Turkmenistan supports the revised UNESCO transdisciplinary project entitled "Towards a culture of peace". A culture of peace will not become a reality unless it is supported by individuals, civil societies, Governments and, most importantly, the leadership of nations. Mr. Oscar Arias, a Nobel Peace laureate and former President of Costa Rica, said that

> "our leaders must be willing to dedicate themselves to peace and education. Our creativity, our sense of justice and our humanity must be our weapons."

Peace-building and peacemaking programmes should utilize all available resources of the United Nations, including human rights instruments, established mechanisms for conflict resolution, programmes and studies of UNESCO, the United Nations University and its International Leadership Academy and the good services of United Nations Volunteers and United Nations Goodwill Ambassadors.

It should be universally accepted that throughout the course of the entire educational process educational institutions must instil in young women and men the values of life and peace, as well as the principles of social coexistence, human solidarity and respect for diversity. We should teach our young people to temper their ambitions with compassion and tolerance so that we can create a new generation in keeping with the tradition of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Then we may continue to entertain the hope of President Nelson Mandela, who envisioned a world in which a newly emerged cadre of leaders would not allow anyone to be denied freedom, turned into a refugee, condemned to go hungry or stripped of human dignity. Otherwise, irresponsibility and ignorance will continue to lead to hatred and violence, social injustice, the expansion of global inequality and rising levels of poverty in places where people may never know peace and democracy but only war and genocide. This is why the concept and practical implementation of a culture of peace are very important for coming generations. In this regard, Turkmenistan supports the idea that the culture of peace should become a central theme of the Millennium Assembly.

In conclusion, I would like to quote the late United States Senator J. William Fulbright, who once said that

> "our future is not in the stars but in our own minds and hearts. Creative leadership and liberal education, which in fact go together, are the first requirements for a hopeful future for humankind."

**Mr. Izquierdo** (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Now is the moment for peace. At the close of the millennium, the entire world is clamouring for a lasting peace that leaves no room for war. In order to achieve this, we need to move towards a culture of peace, tolerance and solidarity based on the fundamental principles of human rights, democracy, freedom and social justice.

We must begin with an education based on ethical, pluralist, democratic, humanist and scientific principles, an education that promotes respect for human rights, develops critical thinking, provides the necessary skills for efficiency in work and production and encourages creativity and the full development of the personality and special skills of each individual. As a result, we will have human beings who are united, tolerant, peace-loving and prepared to resolve their conflicts by means other than the use of force and violence.

The link between peace, education and respect for human rights is essential, and in this respect we are pleased to see how the concept of the right to peace is gaining strength. It suffices to cite the examples contained in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace" (A/53/370), in particular its references to the meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held last April in Windhoek, Namibia, and to the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, in which the concept of the human right to peace was discussed.

Three years ago, in this same Hall, in the framework of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, a group of Latin American countries, supported by a large number of delegations, took the fine initiative of welcoming resolution 5.3, adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and under which the Director-General of UNESCO was invited to direct the activities of the transdisciplinary project entitled "Towards a culture of peace". They asked the Secretary-General to report on the educational activities conducted within the framework of that project. In 1996, after studying the report and taking into account the importance of all the activities thus far carried out for the culture of peace, they requested a report that would include elements of a provisional draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace.

A year ago, in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/292, we received the elements of that provisional draft declaration and programme of action. Today, the General Assembly has before it a concrete proposal, included in the report contained in document A/53/370 to which I have already referred. We therefore believe that the time has now come to turn concepts into proposals for action, to move from words to daily practice. Let us recall that together we decided to proclaim the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. What better time could there be to adopt a long-term programme of action that

will contribute to the building of the world to which we aspire in the next millennium?

Ecuador wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate its commitment to work actively towards finding the mechanism that will make it possible for us to adopt a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. We believe that a declaration and programme of action of such importance needs the support of all, and for that reason we appeal to the international community to take a stand on this subject. The Non-Aligned Movement already did this just a few months ago in Durban, when our heads of State or Government welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/13 and urged the promotion of a culture of peace based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance; the promotion of development and education for peace; the rejection of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and foreign occupation; the free flow of information; the broad participation of women as an integral way of avoiding violence and conflicts; as well as on efforts aimed at creating conditions conducive to peace and its consolidation.

Lastly, I would like to recall that the Government of Ecuador co-sponsored the draft resolution entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)", adopted at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, now contained in document A/53/L.25, which we recommend that the Assembly adopt today. It is in our hands to prepare the world of the future, the world of our children.

**Mr. Xie Bohua** (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Since the end of the cold war, the General Assembly and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have engaged in useful discussions on the relationship between peace and war and between peace and culture, and have advanced the important concept of a transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace, whose most important elements include, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, elimination of poverty, emphasis on education, the advancement of the status of women and the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance among all peoples.

We are pleased to note that, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution adopted last December, the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Director-General of UNESCO, has submitted to the current session a consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. This report is the result of the joint efforts of the world's Governments and peoples. It reflects the ardent aspiration of the peoples of the world to maintain peace, end war, respect human rights and promote development. The Chinese Government expresses its appreciation for the submission of this report.

The Chinese are a peace-loving people. Over 2,000 years ago, the great thinkers of China expressed their aspirations for a world of great harmony, in which there would be no war and people would live together in harmony. They put forward the idea that goodwill and friendly neighbourly relations were a national treasure, and expressed their love of peace and their opposition to conflict and war. Those ideas have become ingrained in all aspects of traditional Chinese culture and have become guiding principles for dealing with relations among Chinese ethnic groups and between China and other countries. Today, all the ethnic groups of China are united and live in harmony; at the same time, China is seeking to establish and develop friendly cooperative relations with the people of other countries on the basis of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

Peace and development are indivisible. Without peace and stability, economic and social development will have no basis on which to proceed; and without economic and social development, peace and stability will be difficult to consolidate and sustain. The Chinese Government has always believed that in order to realize the main objective of peace and development, the international community should make joint efforts to establish a just and reasonable new international political and economic order on the basis of the United Nations Charter and the five principles of peaceful coexistence. There should be no resort to the threat or use of force or to the indiscriminate use of sanctions to resolve differences and disputes among countries. Solutions should be sought by peaceful means, through dialogue instead of confrontation.

As pointed out in the draft declaration and programme of action, a culture of peace is a process of individual, collective and institutional transformation. It grows out of the beliefs and actions of the people themselves and develops and evolves in each country within its specific historical, sociocultural and economic context. Therefore, we believe that the culture of peace is not a rigid concept; it is a multifaceted concept rich in meaning. If it is to promote a culture of peace, the international community should pay full attention to the

diversity of the world and respect the different approaches and means adopted by each country according to its national conditions. Only in that way will it be possible truly to realize the objectives and the essence of the culture of peace.

**Mr. Mra** (Myanmar): The creation of the United Nations was a conceptual watershed in the history of humankind. With that momentous step, we turned our back on the culture of war and violence. At the same time, we together pledged to practise tolerance and live together in peace. However, in the years that followed, we witnessed violence in various guises and, to our dismay, we were not able to effect a transformation from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace. It was only in 1989 that the concept of the culture of peace was revived and began to seriously preoccupy us. As a result of the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to promote the concept at many levels and in many countries, it has become a global movement.

Having addressed the concept in the General Assembly at its last three sessions, we were able to adopt resolution 52/13 last year. Pursuant to that resolution, we now have before us the consolidated report containing a draft declaration and programme of action. In this regard, I wish to express to the Secretary-General and to the Director-General of UNESCO our thanks for the submission of the report contained in document A/53/370. As we are all aware, the draft declaration and programme of action submitted in the report are the end result of the efforts we have made over the years to lay the foundation for the establishment of a culture of peace. We are convinced that these two documents, based on the ideas accumulated in the process and strengthened by the proposals and suggestions submitted not only by various United Nations entities and other international organizations but by Member States as well, represent a solid basis for the achievement of our lofty aim. With the declaration and programme of action available to us now, we are hopeful that the intergovernmental process of examining them can be completed in time for the observance of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000.

The establishment of a culture of peace is bound to be a long-term process of gradual transformation, addressing the roots of violence so firmly embedded and ossified in our minds. As history has clearly shown, transforming a culture of violence and war has proved to be difficult and sometimes even frustrating. The deaths of millions of people in wars and numerous other conflicts after the Second World War are eloquent testimony to that fact. If history and the current tragic developments unfolding in various parts of the world are any guide to us, we can easily foresee many obstacles in our future efforts for a culture of peace. We believe that it is with the conscious and active involvement of all concerned that we will be able to overcome future obstacles. We therefore consider it most appropriate that the declaration adopt a comprehensive approach involving all the main actors. We also believe that the primacy given to the role of a wide range of actors whose actions have a direct impact on the mind is a correct approach that will greatly contribute to the success of our task.

Last year, my delegation stated from this rostrum that the firm establishment of a culture of peace at the national level would determine the success of our endeavours at the global level. In this respect, the declaration has rightly acknowledged the essential role of the State in establishing and consolidating the necessary conditions for the development of the concept. We are also pleased that the declaration recognizes the importance of the specific historical, sociocultural and economic context of a country in nurturing a culture of peace. Myanmar is fully aware of the powerful influence of the specific conditions of a country on the formation of a particular culture.

The importance of education in our undertaking cannot be overemphasized. There has been a consensus on the key role of education in the new directions that today's world is taking. It has been generally accepted that investment in education amounts to investment in peace and progress. The task of constructing a culture of peace requires, first and foremost, disarming hatred and taming violence in their early stages. Education is the best tool in this regard, since it provides all the opportunities to do so. Education provides opportunities for much interaction and for engaging in a long learning process, which are the most propitious factors for strengthening the sense of belonging and togetherness. As a result, it instils tolerance in the mind and contributes to the rejection of violence in all its manifestations. If effectively implemented, a thoroughly formulated and carefully tailored education policy may instil in children, in their formative years, values, attitudes and behaviours which will promote a culture of peace. We believe that this will ensure a future free from all forms of violence. For these reasons, it is gratifying to note that the declaration urges us to mobilize every aspect of education towards the goal of building a culture of peace. In our

delegation's view, the draft declaration in its present form is correct in its thrust and approach.

I also wish to take this opportunity to make some comments on the draft programme of action. We need a programme of action with a sound basis to achieve the aims of a culture of peace. As it is presented in the report, the draft programme fulfils this need. Considering the importance of national efforts for the success of global endeavours, complementarity between national strategies for action and the overall strategy is vitally important. It is therefore a sound approach for the draft programme to encourage the establishment of national strategies that would be complementary to the draft programme before us.

Concerning the specific actions proposed in the draft programme, we believe that these will provide valuable guidance to Member States in working out appropriate national strategies. We feel sure that complementarity of the strategies at all levels will increase synergy in our activities and coherence in our approach. As suggested in the draft programme, it is crucially important to mobilize all available resources for the programme's success. Although we believe that the comprehensive strategy yet to be formulated will include ways and means of finding resources for the programme, it is equally important to have the necessary fundamental resources available well before we fully embark on the programme. In this respect, solid and timely financial support for the programme is of vital importance for its implementation. We are convinced that the envisaged comprehensive strategy for the programme will ensure the adequacy and predictability of the funding. We feel certain that the monitoring system of the comprehensive strategy will also look after the funding aspect of the programme.

As a country where peace of mind is one of the most important aims in the life of almost every individual and where tolerance is one of the most important and most carefully nurtured and practised character traits of everyone, Myanmar was among the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 52/15, entitled "Proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace". We therefore could not agree more with the objective of the draft programme to take advantage of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000 as the appropriate occasion to launch the initiative it sets out. Nothing could be more auspicious than ushering in a new millennium with a peace programme.

Finally, the multifaceted task of constructing a culture of peace requires comprehensive action on all fronts, addressing all ages and all groups. It is incumbent on all of us to concert and coordinate all our efforts to accomplish this monumental undertaking. With the momentum we have gained thus far and with a road map for the future provided by the draft declaration and programme of action, we fervently hope that we will be successful.

**Mr. Castaneda-Cornejo** (El Salvador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It my honour to address the Assembly on behalf of Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama on agenda item 31, entitled "Culture of peace". I convey the appreciation of those delegations to the Secretary-General, who, in coordination with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has submitted to the Assembly a consolidated report (A/53/370 and Add.1 and Add.2) containing a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace.

For many centuries people believed that war was inevitable, and that the settlement of conflicts and disputes among peoples could come only through violence or other equally destructive action linked to violence. This contributed to the forming and consolidation of a culture of war, which in the course of history led to innumerable acts of barbarism, destruction and death, and which found its ultimate expression in the Second World War and in the conflicts that arose under the bipolar system that followed that war.

With the creation of the United Nations in 1945, the international community embarked on an experiment that over time would radically change the idea that wars were inevitable: from the moment of its foundation, the new international Organization, based on universally shared values and purposes, defined its principal task as being "to preserve succeeding generations from the scourge of war". The Organization itself was thus an act of a culture of peace.

As the Secretary-General says in the report on a culture of peace,

> "The transition from the culture of war to a culture of peace, initially taken up as a priority by UNESCO, has now been taken up by the United Nations as well." (*A/53/370, annex, para. 3*)

Recognition of this priority by the United Nations system opens the door on a new era for mankind in which we are confident that the conclusion will be drawn that violence, in any of its manifestations, can be avoided.

The Central American countries and the Dominican Republic share the view that the essence of a culture of peace approach is that rather than intervening in violent conflicts after they have erupted and then engaging in post-conflict peace-building, it is more humane and more efficient to prevent such violence in the first place by addressing its roots. Many of our peoples in the Central American region had to learn this approach in a painful way, as a direct or indirect result of profound social, economic, political and ideological conflicts that for more than a decade put us on the path of violence and intolerance, confrontation and the culture of war.

With the peace that arrived thanks to the spirit that gave rise to the Esquipulas, Chapultepec and Guatemala agreements, we in Central America aspire to a democratic and equitable region whose development is based on a process of progressive improvement in quality of life through economic growth with social equity, and the transformation of methods of production and patterns of consumption based on ecological balance as a vital support for the region. We hold that aspiration in spite of the obstacles and difficulties that have been magnified by the irreparable effects of hurricane Mitch in our region: property destroyed, thousands of lives loss and some 2 million people injured.

The vision of a region united in peace, freedom, democracy and development, a vision shared also by the Dominican Republic, is what makes it possible for our Governments to reiterate their resolute support for the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace presented by the Secretary-General in coordination with the Director-General of UNESCO in the document before us, which we hope will be adopted by consensus at this session.

The considered aspects set out in the declaration on a culture of peace correspond to and complement the efforts of the international community to promote and universally apply all human rights — especially during this year when we are commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action — because, in our opinion, there is an undeniable and unequivocal link between peace and respect for all human rights.

We agree that a culture of peace is a process of individual, collective and institutional transformation which arises out of the beliefs and actions of individuals themselves and which evolves within each country in a given historical, socio-cultural and economic context. In this respect, the role played by the State to ensure respect for and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential and must take place in close collaboration and cooperation with all members of civil society in order to truly create the conditions that allow for the development of a culture of peace.

Furthermore, we agree that education is the fundamental means to build a culture of peace. It is for this reason that we value highly the efforts made for peace by the Governments of the American continent through the adoption of the Program of Education for Peace in the Hemisphere by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States on 3 June 1998. We also value the efforts made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the framework of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004, and the actions that will be carried out on the occasion of the commemoration of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

In connection with the programme of action, our Governments believe that there exist enough elements for broad-ranging and profound reflection in each of our countries that would allow us to prepare a national programme of action to promote the implementation of the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report in accordance with our needs and economic and socio-cultural conditions.

Likewise, we believe that there is agreement between the objectives and strategies of the programme of action on a culture of peace and the concrete measures that can be adopted at the national, regional and international levels to promote the consolidation and integration of this effort with the gains and achievements made by the Member States of the United Nations in connection with the application of the results of global conferences, particularly those held since 1982. That agreement illustrates the importance that the United Nations system attaches to the mobilization of international public opinion for a culture of peace for the new millennium.

I would like to reiterate the commitment and political will of the Governments of the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic to disseminate and

promote the values, attitudes and behaviours that are necessary to build a culture of peace that is strengthened by the successes and challenges confronting our peoples and Governments in the implementation of various programmes on a culture of peace that have been conducted in the region for some years now. We also want to reiterate our support for the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace presented by the Secretary-General. We agree with him that the International Year for the Culture of Peace in the year 2000 can be an opportunity to put into practice the initiatives of the programme of action and to help motivate international public opinion in favour of a permanent culture of peace in the minds and the hearts of all humanity.

**Mrs. de Barish** (Costa Rica) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the important statement made in connection with agenda item 31, entitled "Culture of peace", by the Permanent Representative of El Salvador, Ambassador Ricardo Cornejo, on behalf of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic and my country, Costa Rica.

The delegation of Costa Rica is convinced of the need for and the importance of promoting a culture of peace in order to achieve profound change — to replace the culture of war and violence with the culture of peace and non-violence. This will be the challenge of the new millennium. Our calling to peace has been demonstrated throughout the years through a number of proposals, such as the establishment of the University for Peace in 1980. The objectives and activities of the University have included and will continue to include cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in an effort to establish a culture of peace in the world through the irreplaceable means of education and publicity.

Subsequently, my Government proposed the proclamation of 1986 as the International Year of Peace and, at the same time, the International Day of Peace to coincide annually with the opening day of the General Assembly session. Lastly, it called for the proclamation of the World Week of Peace during the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, from 24 to 30 October 1995. In this connection, the representative of Turkmenistan referred just moments ago in her statement to the former President of Costa Rica, Mr. Oscar Arias, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

We thank Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh for introducing this important item so eloquently.

My delegation also appreciates the presentation by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO of the excellent consolidated report contained in document A/53/370, which was submitted to us in accordance with resolution 52/13, adopted on 20 November 1997 with 71 co-sponsors, including my own delegation.

This report contains the draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace. We believe that these texts were prepared in a meticulous and detailed way, as we can see from pages 5 to 14, and that they reflect what has been said in this connection in past years. They contain definitions and concepts of the culture of peace, as well as the direction that future action should take in the United Nations system and in the international community. We look forward with great interest to the adoption of both the draft declaration and the draft programme of action as soon as possible, so that we can enter the new millennium with that vision of a culture of peace. It is obvious that peoples throughout the world are seeking a vision of a better world, which could take the form of a culture of peace as conceived in various resolutions of the United Nations and as is reflected in the draft declaration and programme of action.

My delegation believes that this should be the theme of the millennium. With the end of the cold war, the United Nations now has the opportunity to fulfil one of its fundamental and primary objectives: that of abolishing war. This clearly requires a profound transformation of the cultural roots of war and violence in the transition to a culture of peace and non-violence.

As is described in the introduction — pages 4 and 5 — of the document we are considering, this objective is part of the very history of the United Nations and its partners and has been recognized by the General Assembly as a priority in its designation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. We recognize that the culture of peace is a necessary precondition for national and international peace and security. It complements preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, disarmament and military conversion.

It is not enough to send peacekeeping forces to separate parties that are at war or to undertake post-

conflict peace-building, nor does preventive diplomacy seem to suffice. We must also act at a deeper level. The development of a culture of peace can provide a secure basis for the achievement of disarmament and military conversion, and it can meet concerns for human security.

The transition to a culture of peace requires the participation of individuals, of communities and of institutions at all levels. It requires the development of a global movement so that the United Nations can provide inspiration and leadership. The International Year for the Culture of Peace, 2000, offers an opportunity for the mobilization of that global movement, which will include educators; journalists; parliamentarians; religious communities; organizations for women, youth and the elderly; civil society and non-governmental organizations.

It is important to emphasize the relationship between the culture of peace and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Respect for and defence of all human, political and civil, social, cultural and economic rights is essential for a culture of peace. In marking this year the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration, it is necessary and important for the international community to reaffirm its full commitment to the establishment of all human rights.

There is nothing more destructive to human rights than the culture of war and violence. Therefore, the promotion of the culture of peace should be understood as one of the most significant milestones in the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Finally, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Federico Mayor, has stated that the right to peace is a human right.

My delegation hopes that the idea of a culture of peace will be the positive and basic vision with which we enter the new millennium. Costa Rica, as a sponsor of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.25, which was recommended by the Economic and Social Council at its recent meeting, would be very pleased indeed to see this draft resolution adopted by consensus in the Assembly.

**Mr. Najem** (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly is once again considering the item "Culture of peace", thus providing all States with the opportunity to put forward their views and ideas on the meaning of a culture of peace.

Lebanon has always been the cradle of peace and disseminated its values and culture. Hence we would like to enrich the debates of the General Assembly with a contribution that may clarify certain dimensions of the issues that we think should be included in the documents to be issued on the culture of peace.

It expresses the desire for knowledge and the longing for a feeling of security. A civilization based on the culture of peace should oppose all aspects of ignorance, oppression and backwardness. It should not condone hunger, poverty, displacement or foreign occupation, for such scourges have grave implications for the international community and jeopardize international peace and security.

The culture of peace certainly opposes the culture of war. Therefore it can never condone the consequences to human society of the culture of war. I should like to emphasize the need not to hasten to deal with the culture of peace as if the world today were free of war or of its causes. Human history has seen many cultures and civilizations decline because no one defended them against the enemies of peace.

The culture of peace is a legitimate vision of the future and of the twenty-first century. If the essence of the culture of peace is intervention to prevent armed conflicts, then the international community, as represented in the United Nations, the forum for peace, is called upon to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli troops to observe the principles and the culture of peace. Israel must be compelled to desist from its aggressive policy against southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa Valley, occupied since 1978. Israel rejects the implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which stipulate its immediate and unconditional withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

This policy, which arrogantly and intransigently refuses to implement the resolutions of the United Nations, is inimical to the culture of peace, which we all call for its dissemination among our people in order that they may live in peace. Is not the obsessive mentality of war prevailing in Israel reflected in the daily bombardment by weapons of all types of the civilian population in southern Lebanon? Is that not inimical to the culture of peace? The premeditated acts of aggression on the part of the Israeli occupation troops against the headquarters of the United Nations in Qana in southern Lebanon — the envoys of peace in the area — in April 1996 and the murder of 106 innocent women, children

and elderly people, are these not acts that contravene the culture of peace?

Furthermore, what can we say when we see Israel, which claims to want to implement resolution 425 (1973) which stipulates Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon, steal Lebanese soil and transfer it to Israel. Israel has admitted this. In this context, the Arabs, who have made peace an integral part of their civilization, legacy and daily conduct, as well as a deeply rooted element of their lives and customs, see the natural role of the United Nations and its various agencies as being to uphold and disseminate vigorously the values of peace. Hence, the Arabs have accepted the United Nations concept for achieving peace in the Middle East on the basis of land for peace, as well as Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). On the other hand, the Israeli Government is sparing no effort to provoke new aggressive wars and to possess nuclear weapons.

Here we are faced with two different cultures: humane, national culture — the culture of peace — versus the culture of domination and aggression as represented by the politics of the Israeli occupation forces. Our apprehension here is that culture itself would become an arena for sparking wars among peoples and states, instead of becoming the culture of peace that we all desire.

We regard the diversity of cultures in the world as a positive factor that enriches the culture of peace, which should be the sum total of all these cultures. In this respect there is no room for engaging in the whirlpool of imposing the cultures of certain countries and peoples at the expense of the cultures and customs of other peoples. Human rights are an expression of tolerance in all cultures. That is the foundation for peace and progress. Human rights — if understood properly, interpreted in a just manner, and implemented without double standards — are not alien to any culture, but part and parcel of the sum culture of all nations.

Nonetheless, the bitter reality confronting us in many parts of the world is that many attempts are being made to distort these facts by disregarding the massive violations of human rights as well as the values of the culture of peace. While there is disregard of the right to self-determination of the millions of Palestinians and of the hundreds of thousands of others that have been displaced by the Israeli occupying forces in southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan, we discern no decisive and requisite movement on the part of some of those defenders of the culture of peace and human rights to compel the Israeli occupying forces to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories, to observe and implement the relevant United Nations resolutions with a view to giving a chance to a just peace and to its culture so that they may be deeply embedded in the conscience and in the daily life of all peoples.

Lebanon, the inheritor of 6,000 years of civilization, is looking forward today to a world free from occupation and hegemony, a world in which the principles of the United Nations prevail — the principles of justice, equality and peace.

**Mr. Yacoubou** (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): The inclusion on the agenda of item 31, entitled "Culture of peace", gives me once again the opportunity of taking the floor before the Assembly in order to share with it the special interest that my country, Benin, has in peace throughout the world and, above all, in the need to safeguard this peace by the step-by-step and effective establishment of a culture of peace.

Following the example of other delegations, the delegation of Benin would like to commend and thank most warmly the Secretary-General and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), not only for the very useful documents made available to us, but also and above all for their tireless efforts to heighten the international community's awareness of this universal value — peace — and to plant in minds the seeds of such a culture, which is so essential if we are to deal with the many challenges confronting humankind.

With the end of that long-dreaded phenomenon, the cold war, the international community heaved a sigh of relief because it felt that from then on it would be spared another world war as large as those that twice so terribly affected humankind. But we must now recognize that the coming of peace remains threatened by the persistence of underdevelopment and, above all, by the resurgence of the doctrines and ideologies of racism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, intolerance and violence that, unfortunately, underlie the deadly and genocidal conflicts now taking place more or less throughout the world, and especially in Africa and in Europe.

Thus, in order to guarantee a lasting peace, we must simultaneously deal with these two categories of economic and social factors. Along with our efforts and actions in the area of development, we should work together to discourage forever the doctrines of violence and of intolerance and to promote — especially through

education — a culture of peace in the mind of each and every human being, through respect for and protection and promotion of human rights.

In this regard, my delegation welcomes the effective actions undertaken by UNESCO in this area and would like to ensure that organization of Benin's support and full cooperation.

The success of such a noble but difficult a task as the culture of peace should not be the prerogative of one individual, one State or one international organization. It demands the participation of the entire international community in the implementation, under the aegis of the United Nations, of a strategy and programme of action planned and enacted by all the actors of international life.

This is why my delegation welcomes the texts submitted to the Assembly: the draft declaration and programme of action contained in document A/[illegible] and draft resolution A/53/L.25, entitled "International [illegible]de for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)". Above and beyond the outline of the concept of a culture of peace that they provide, these drafts contain proposals for strategies and concrete joint actions to be carried out to promote a genuine culture of peace and to forever ward off the spectre of war and conflict.

The establishment of a culture of peace would enable our Organization and the entire international community to devote their efforts and energies to the solution of many development problems, thanks to international security and the respect for and defence of human rights that it would inspire.

In proclaiming the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace, the General Assembly did not wish simply to show its interest in peace; it wished, above all, to urge the international community to give priority to the promotion of a culture of peace in order to safeguard an international society free of violence for current and future generations.

Therefore, Benin supports the proposal that the principal theme for the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, to be held in the year 2000, be "A culture of peace", so that the entire world might become aware of the need to safeguard this peace so as to ensure the well-being of the individual in the next millennium.

In view of the foregoing, it is up to each and every State to take here and now the steps required for the implementation of the programme of action to be adopted following our work. Provisions should be especially made to mark the year 2000, the International Year for the Culture of Peace, through the implementation of consciousness-raising programmes involving parliamentarians, political parties, teachers and journalists, in a word, all of civil society.

As far as Benin is concerned, it has already been working, through its democratization process begun in 1990, towards the establishment of a culture of human rights, a prerequisite for a culture of peace. Political and civil rights, the right to be different, and tolerance are all precepts which are instilled and experienced daily in Benin, where it is now taken for granted that respect for and the protection and promotion of the rights of the individual are the requirement sine qua non for the promotion of a genuine culture of peace.

**Mr. Ka** (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Racial, ethnic or religious hatred, ignorance, cultural prejudice, xenophobia, abject poverty, the stifling of public liberties — these are all factors which harm peaceful coexistence among societies.

Peace is not only the absence of war. Racial discrimination, ethnic, religious or political intolerance, the failings of democracy and the absence of social dialogue can also be sources of tension which should be quelled.

My delegation believes that as this century fades into the dawn of the third millennium, with so many challenges giving rise to both hope and concern, humankind needs to take stock of its virtues and of its inexhaustible wealth — wealth represented by the dialogue among civilizations and cultures. We must implement a theory of convergence in order to ensure a transition from the reason of force to the force of reason, to borrow an eloquent expression from the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr. Federico Mayor. In the final analysis, the culture of peace implies the culture of non-violence, with priority being given to dialogue and negotiation. It also involves a strategy for conflict-prevention.

Today, all the regions of the world are subject to destructive conflicts which are swallowing up enormous human and financial resources which could have, or

should have, been devoted to the peaceful development of nations. These continuing conflicts instil in people's minds a dangerous culture of violence which no longer even spares children, women or the elderly. In addition, modern means of communication are, consciously or unconsciously, being used to spread the culture of violence, intolerance and xenophobia.

There is no need to recall that in this quest for the culture of peace the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize was created by UNESCO in 1989. This prize has been awarded to outstanding personalities: in 1991 to Nelson Mandela, then Vice-President of the African National Congress, and to President Frederik De Klerk of South Africa. In 1993 it was awarded to Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat for strengthening the Middle East peace process, following the signing of the Washington peace accords. In 1996 the prize was awarded to Alvaro Arzu, President of the Republic of Guatemala, and to Commander Rolando Moran, representative of the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, for encouraging the peace process and consolidating the agreement of 29 December 1996. Finally, in 1997, the prize was given to Fidel Ramos, then President of the Philippines, and to Nur Misuari, Chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front, for having signed a peace agreement on 2 September 1996, thus ending a 30-year conflict. The great merit of the Houphouët-Boigny Prize is that, in the final analysis, it is designed to promote a global vision of the culture of peace in Africa and throughout the world.

The Government of Senegal, which has made dialogue one of the constant aspects of its foreign policy, remains dedicated to the promotion of a culture of peace. My Government, in cooperation with UNESCO, has taken the initiative of building a memorial not far from Gorée Island, facing the Americas, to remind the world what the slave trade was about, as well as to build a bridge designed to reconcile peoples who should henceforth cultivate forgiveness and tolerance.

This is why my country believes that it is of the utmost importance that we invest in education and the upbringing of the younger generations with a view to the universality of values and ideas, with a pan-humanist approach which would safeguard and perpetuate moderation, harmony and conciliation among peoples and nations.

For these reasons my country became a sponsor of the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly proclaiming the decade 2001-2010 the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World — namely, a decade for the children who will be responsible for the fate of humankind.

Let us see to it together that we raise the defences of peace in the spirit of these young generations and that we ensure everywhere respect for and promotion of human rights — all human rights — be they civil, political, social, cultural or economic.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives us an exceptional opportunity to promote human rights education in our school systems, as well as the culture of tolerance and peace in relations among States and peoples. To that end, the role of the United Nations it irreplaceable in building a world of tolerance, peace and love.

**Mr. Pérez-Otermin** (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): For Uruguay, the culture of peace represents a vital commitment of the international community. We are by nature a peace-loving country. We understand no other form of behaviour and coexistence among nations. We cannot imagine a world in constant conflict. We do not want coexistence to be plagued by confrontation and are not pleased to see brothers from other cultures destroying societies that they could be building in peace. The time has come to settle quarrels begun generations ago. The time has come to end discord and to look with optimism to the future.

The culture of peace, as opposed to the culture of conflict, coincides with the end of the cold war. Nevertheless, and paradoxically, since 1989 over 4 million people have died as victims of armed conflict, most of the them civilians.

At its last session, the General Assembly, through resolution 52/15, declared the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and at this session will implement the programme of action prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The United Nations is making progress in that direction by emphasizing the promotion of peace among its Member States. This is consistent with the founding idea of the Organization, which was based on avoiding war among nations.

Today, the nature of conflicts has changed. They have gone from being international to being mostly domestic conflicts that arise largely out of poverty,

ignorance, environmental destruction and, *inter alia*, disregard for the basic rights required of a democratic order. The culture of peace entails a new mission for the coming century: to address the roots and causes of war and violence. This is an integral approach encompassing respect for human rights, democracy, tolerance, sustainable development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women.

I can assure the Assembly that, in Uruguay, educational programmes have already incorporated the concept of a culture of peace and it is our hope that future generations will fully embrace this view of the world. We are particularly pleased to know that, in our region, guerilla groups are basically laying down their weapons and taking up enterprises that encompass societies as a whole. We are especially delighted to see that our brothers in Ecuador and Peru have decided to abjure war and embrace peace. We are pleased that the Presidents of the Southern Cone Common Market, and of Bolivia and Chile, declared in Ushuaia, Argentine Republic, that our countries constitute a zone of peace.

The effectiveness of the culture of peace begins with the family, the primary and priority nucleus in which the child must receive its earliest instruction in that respect, then extends to the schools and communities. In this programme, another priority is the participation of the mass media: the oral, written and televised press, along with computers. Their duty and responsibility may not be emphasized as strongly in the draft programme of action as we believe they should have been. The international community, represented in this General Assembly, must appeal emphatically to the media to undertake the enormous task of inculcating a culture of peace, not a culture of violence. That global mobilization must start now.

Let us ensure that the year 2000 will mark the beginning of a century devoted to peace, in which nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction are nothing but a nightmare of the past. Let us, with courage and determination, relegate to oblivion the culture of war that has dominated the century in which we still live.

My delegation is pleased with the report submitted by the Secretary-General and prepared in cooperation with the Director-General of UNESCO. We give our complete support to the draft declaration and programme of action contained therein, and we suggest that a culture of peace be considered a principal topic of the Millennium Assembly.

**Mr. Zmeevski** (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation consistently advocates the idea of a culture of peace, which includes values, approaches and universal norms of conduct based on respect for peace, tolerance, fundamental rights and human freedoms. The implementation of the concept of a culture of peace is a difficult and multifaceted task, the fulfilment of which, in practice, would entail the ultimate transition to a world without war and violence in which the rule of law and democracy would prevail.

Over the past year, this concept has been further developed, as reflected in the draft programme of action on a culture of peace contained in the consolidated report submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/53/370. In particular, the draft calls attention to the need for a universal strategy in this field, complemented by the preparation of strategies at the national level.

It is precisely in this area that a broad-based project has been launched in our country, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, called "Year 2000 — A Culture of Peace in Russia". Its major objective is to focus and coordinate the holding of activities in Russia for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. In the long run, we aim at promoting the establishment in Russian society of a stable psychological trend towards non-violence and tolerance and the idea of peace as a positive process closely linked to the protection of human rights, democracy, mutual understanding and solidarity among all peoples and cultures.

In preparing the concept of the draft, account was taken of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992; the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995; the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995; and the International Conference "From the stereotypes of war to the ideals of peace through culture and education", held in Moscow in 1997.

The relevance and the special nature of the project as carried out in Russia are closely linked to the need for the formation of a civil society, the rule of law, the prevention of ethno-religious and social tensions and the performance of tasks for improving the cultural and living standards of our people. Furthermore, the culture of peace is a movement towards the reaffirmation of universal values and a search for answers to the challenges of so-called civilized crises in which we

increasingly find serious phenomena such as alienation and marginalization of the individual, cultural cruelty and violence and the spread of various forms of extremism. The "Year 2000 — A Culture of Peace in Russia" project proceeds from the concept of a multifaceted idea of peace, non-violence and tolerance in the minds of people. A principal way to carry out this task is through education, including formal education in schools and informal education through public institutions and mass media.

The culture of peace is reaffirmed in the process of mobilizing civil society and enhancing the legal protection of the population. It will triumph when the importance of preventing conflicts and eliminating their causes, through dialogue and negotiation, begins to be understood not just in relation to State structures but in relation to all citizens. In practical terms, this will mean the implementation of a set of specific long-term measures. These include, in particular, disseminating public information on the purposes and the tasks of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, conducting scientific studies on the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, organizing and using international experience in this sphere, forming a system of educating a society and creating a spirit of peace, democracy, human rights and tolerance, implementing activities promoting respect for and observance of human rights and the rights of minorities and establishing non-violence as the most important condition for the effective prevention of conflicts.

In supporting the adoption by the General Assembly of a programme of action on a culture of peace, the Russian delegation expresses the hope that the implementation of its provisions will promote the utilization of the basic purposes of the United Nations, first and foremost, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person.

**Mr. Kpotsra** (Togo) (*interpretation from French*): As we have been able to see, the question of promoting a culture of peace will be one of the priority objectives of the international community at the beginning of the next millennium.

If that is so, it is because, according to the report on this subject issued by the Secretary-General in coordination with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

> "In a rapidly and deeply changing world characterized by the growing importance of ethical issues, a culture of peace provides future generations with values that can help them to shape their destiny and actively participate in constructing a more just, humane, free and prosperous society and a more peaceful world." (*A/53/370, part I, para. 7*)

On reflection, it seems clear that the process began with the very creation of the United Nations, founded on the values of peace and justice and designed to build a more just and peaceful world.

Before proceeding, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General, and through him the Director-General of UNESCO, on their excellent report, which describes in great detail the major areas of action to be undertaken by the United Nations system and Member States in order to save future generations from the scourge of war, hardship and poverty.

Among the actions to be undertaken, I wish to refer briefly certain aspects that to my delegation seem essential. The building of a culture of peace, let us recall, is a task that requires wide-ranging educational, cultural, social and civic action. It is an endeavour that calls on every individual and presupposes a strategy of openness at the family, national, regional and global levels designed to ensure that a culture of peace is an inextricable part of culture itself and that it is deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of all men and women.

It will be up to young States, and those of Africa in particular, to work to strengthen the achievements of the nation State in artificially drawn geographic areas, a phenomenon that has already weakened the feeling of shared national community among populations living there. This phenomenon seems to have acquired a new dimension, since the process of democratization — seen as having to take into account the specificities of each people — has skidded out of control under the effect of pressures from outside the continent and little understood national realities. The inevitable consequence is that the sudden leap towards democratization in most of our States has been accompanied by socio-political troubles that have seriously frayed the social fabric and the efforts for national unity undertaken following independence.

In addition to consolidation of the nation State, the management of post-conflict periods on the African

continent in particular, is, we believe, another essential aspect to be taken into account in promoting a culture of peace. Indeed, since violence always breeds violence, if concrete and appropriate actions are not taken in regions affected by conflict, we run the great risk of seeing those regions become constant settings for all types of confrontation. It is therefore important to develop and broaden the efforts made in this respect within the framework of the United Nations system. In this vein, we believe there is reason to hope that future peace agreements will be increasingly linked to the development of a culture of peace and that they will include national programmes on a culture of peace, calling upon parties to a conflict to work together in implementing development projects.

In the same vein, it is to be hoped that the follow-up to consideration of the important report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa will result in concrete actions that can alter the present trends and help place Africa on the path of real development, in peace and stability.

The vital need to promote a culture of peace also requires a revitalization of the three United Nations regional centres for peace and disarmament. In this connection, we are gratified at the renewed interest in these centres, which, we are convinced, can contribute to improving understanding and cooperation among States in each of the regions concerned in the fields of peace, disarmament and development.

The Government of Togo remains convinced that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa — regarding which the First Committee, on 5 November last, unanimously adopted a resolution calling for its revitalization — can in the present context play a leading role by encouraging the adoption of confidence-building measures at the regional level and thus foster progress in the field of sustainable development. In so doing, the Regional Centre will support the efforts made in the framework of the mechanisms for prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the African continent.

My country, where the Centre is headquartered, takes this opportunity to reiterate its heartfelt thanks to the friendly States that have always contributed financially to the Trust Fund for the Centre. We solemnly appeal for the efforts now under way to revitalize it to be sustained and supported by all.

As the Declaration adopted at the end of the World Summit for Social Development proclaimed, social justice and the elimination of poverty are indispensable for the establishment and maintenance of peace and security both within nations and between them. Likewise, as the United Nations Development Programme so rightly affirms in its proposals, development that is focused on the human being is both a prerequisite for peace and the consequence of peace.

This demonstrates how important it is to ensure that the other dimension, the elimination of poverty, will be the object of particular attention in our campaign to promote a culture of peace. For if peace is to mean more than just the absence of war, it must obviously have a close relationship to economic development.

However, despite the many efforts made by the African States to reform their economies while broadening the scope of democracy, they still face economic and financial difficulties that do not allow them to meet the vital, minimum needs of their populations.

Hence, any effort to depart from the culture of violence would be inherently flawed if the populations concerned were to continue to live in a state of total deprivation, since situations of poverty are always conducive to the emergence of conflicts. Therefore, the interaction between the culture of peace and sustainable development is the cornerstone of the task the community of States faces at the threshold of the new millennium.

The report submitted to us in this connection describes the major aspects of the task to be accomplished and sets certain guidelines. It remains for States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies and national civil societies equipped with the necessary political will to fulfil the profound and legitimate aspirations of the world's peoples for a world of peace and justice, a world free of hardship and poverty.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*